THE ELGIN TRAINING COURSE

Second Year

THE ELGIN PRESS
RELIGIOUS EDUCATIONAL TEXTS
TRAINING SERIES

Second Year

E. B. HOFF
J. HUGH HECKMAN
M. W. EMMERT

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Elgin Press

Foreword

The Sunday-school is the Bible school of the church. The Bible is the principal Textbook of the Sunday-school. For this reason a training book needs to have much of the Bible in it if it is to serve teachers of religion best. In view of the fact that the work of the Sunday-school teacher is far-reaching in its effect upon character, there has been a growing demand everywhere that teachers receive better training for their work.

The Elgin Training Texts have been prepared to follow the International Standard Training Course which extends over three years or one hundred and twenty units and covers Bible, child study, methods, administration and special elective courses.

It is the belief of the publishers that these books will be found a valuable help in the preparation of Sunday-school teachers for their work. With this belief, and with the fond hope that they will accomplish that for which they are sent forth, they are submitted to all Sunday-school workers everywhere.

General Contents

24 Lessons, The Bible, E. B. Hoff, ... 11 to 168
10 Lessons, The Program of the Christian Religion, J. Hugh Heckman, ...169 to 272
10 Lessons, Studies in the Devotional Life, M. W. Emmert, ...273 to 339

Table of Contents

How to Organize and Conduct a Teacher Training Class, ... 7

THE BIBLE, ... 11

1. Introduction to the Bible Lessons, ... 11
2. Patriarchal Period, ... 15
3. The Exodus from Egypt and the Journey to the Land of Promise, ... 21
4. The Conquest, ... 28
5. The Rise and Prosperity of the Kingdom, .. 36
6. The Decline and Fall of the Kingdom, ... 43
7. The Foreign Supremacy of the Old and New Testament, ... 50

Introduction to the Old Testament Literature, ... 60

8. Psalms, ... 61
9. Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament, 66
10. The Prophetic Literature, ... 73
11. The Religion of the Old Testament Age, .. 81
12. A Review of the Old Testament Lessons, .. 87
13. Life and Ministry of Jesus, ... 89
14. The First Three Gospels, ... 96
15. The Gospel According to John, ...102
16. The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ, ..107
17. The Acts, ...113
18. The Epistles of the New Testament, ...122
19. Hebrews and the General Epistles, ...130
20. Revelation, ...137
21. The Power of Prayer in Christian Life, ..143
22. The Power of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Christian, ...149
23. A Review of the New Testament Lessons, .155
24. The History and the Inspiration of the Bible, ...159

Rome
ITALY
MACEDONIA
BLACK SEA
CASPIAN SEA
Thessalonica
ASSYRIA
Nineveh
Haran
ASIA MINOR
Corinth
Ephesus
Patmos
SICILY
SYRIA
CYPRUS
MELITA
CRETE
MEDIA
Ecbatana
Sidon
Damascus
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Tyre
Babylon
CHALDEA
PERSIA
JERUSALEM
Ur
BABYLONIA
EGYPT
AFRICA
ARABIAN
DESERT
RED SEA
PERSIAN GULF
MAP
OF THE
BIBLE LANDS

The Bible

E. B. Hoff

Lesson I

Introduction to the Bible Lessons

The Purpose

These lessons have been written to inspire a deeper interest in Bible study, to create higher ideals of interpretation, and to give a somewhat definite idea of the general arrangement of the Bible.

What They Are

They are a plain, simple introduction to the Bible for beginners. The plan of the work combines the story method, the dispensational outline method, and the book-study method in such a way as gradually to unfold the Bible story from beginning to end. The historical, chronological, and geographical background has been kept constantly in view in the arrangement of this work.

Two Plans

It is so arranged that one chapter or lesson may be covered in a single lesson in a sort of general survey or, again, if there is sufficient time one chapter may be the basis of two or more lessons in more careful study. For this purpose many texts have been inserted into the body of this work. These texts are, in the main, the material from which the book has been drawn and will foster a more careful inductive study of the Bible.

How to Study

The suggestive readings accompanying these lessons have been selected with special view toward opening the lesson. They may be used for daily readings, or may be

read at other times, according to the convenience of the student. They should, however, be read before studying the lesson. When this has been done the lesson should be carefully studied in the light of the questions and suggestions for study appended to the lesson. The answer to these questions should be in writing, recorded in a student's notebook, which may then be taken to class. These questions and suggestions strike right at the heart of the lessons and should be answered with great care. The maps called for by these questions may also be drawn in this book. The student should draw them again and again until he becomes quite familiar with them and until it becomes easy to draw them. The prominent journeys, also, should be marked on the map. In this way the events will be closely associated with their geographical connection and will be the more easily understood and the better remembered.

The Divine Source

These lessons and, in fact, all Sunday-school lessons, should be studied in a humble, prayerful attitude under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, that the work may be done not merely in human strength, but to the glory of God in the upbuilding of his kingdom.

American Version

This work is based on the American Standard Version, which is, without doubt, the best version we have at present. It is so arranged in paragraphs as to make it much easier to get the thought than where it is not so arranged. It would be well if each student could have such a Bible with which to work.

The Bible First

The student should learn to depend upon the Bible rather than Bible helps in the preparation of his Sunday-school lessons. Of course, a good concordance and a good Bible dictionary are exceedingly helpful and, in fact, almost invaluable in Bible study; but the Bible diction-

aries, commentaries and all other helps, excepting concordances, must be used with care and must be tested by the Bible, because very often they are not true to the Bible.

All matters of criticism and speculative interpretation have been carefully kept out of these lessons because, in this age of speculation and criticism, young Bible teachers need to have their faith in the Bible well grounded.

Keeping the Lessons for Reference

This book should be kept by each student for reference in regular routine of Sunday-school work. For example, if the regular Sunday-school lesson is in the book of First Kings it will be exceedingly helpful to turn to Lesson VI and there read again the introduction to this period; or, if it is in one of the books of the prophets, turn to the lesson on Prophetic Literature and there get the true setting of the lesson.

To the many young men and women who are eagerly longing to know more of God's Word, that they may become more like the Great Teacher and may become efficient in his service, these lessons are humbly and prayerfully dedicated.

Questions and Suggestions for Study.

1. Give the threefold purpose of these lessons.
2. What is the nature of these lessons?
3. In what two ways may they be used?
4. Of what value are the texts inserted in this work?
5. Give the important steps in the preparation of these lessons.
6. Give an important advantage of the American Standard Version.
7. How may helps be used in Bible study?
8. What should be done with these lessons after the course is finished?

9. Look carefully over the entire ground of these lessons and note the general outline of the work.

10. Read very carefully Lesson XXI and Lesson XXII, that you may be able to do the best work in this course of studies.

Lesson II

The Old Testament

PATRIARCHAL PERIOD

Genesis

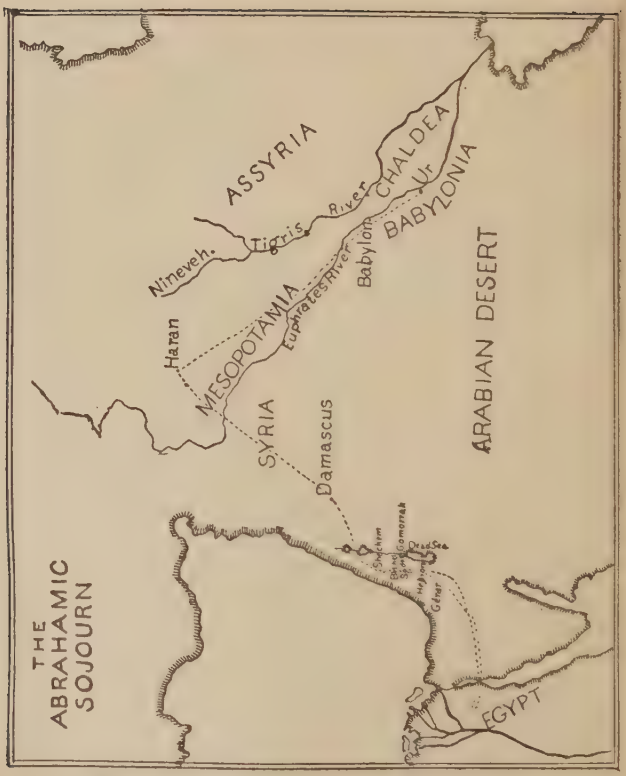
General Survey

The book of Genesis, as its name indicates, is a book of beginnings. It is a record of God's dealings with man for a period of about twenty-five hundred years. It is not a complete history of this time, but it gives an account of the unfolding of the plan of salvation. The book contains three main sections:

1. Adam and his generations, chapters 1-5.
2. Noah and his generations, chapters 6-11.
3. Abraham and his generations, chapters 12-50.

Suggestive Readings

1. The story of creation. Gen. 1: 1-31.
2. Man in his opportunities and responsibilities. Gen. 2: 1-25.
3. Sin: its source and results. Gen. 3: 1-24.
4. The story of Cain and Abel. Gen. 4: 1-16.
5. The cause of the deluge. Gen. 6: 1-22.
6. Noah and his family spared. Gen. 7: 6-24.
7. Noah's gratitude and God's covenant. Gen. 8: 20-9: 17.
8. The great dispersion. Gen. 11: 1-9.
9. Abraham called. Gen. 12: 1-9.
10. God's covenant with Abraham. Gen. 15: 1-21.
11. Abraham tested. Gen. 22. 1-19.
12. Jacob's great struggle. Gen. 32: 22-32.
13. Jacob blessing his sons. Gen. 49: 1-27.
14. Joseph's promise. Gen. 50: 22-26.


THE ABRAHAMIC SOJOURN
ASSYRIA
Nineveh.
Tigris River
CHALDEA
Ur
BABYLONIA
Babylon
Euphrates River
MESOPOTAMIA
Haran
SYRIA
Damascus
ARABIAN DESERT
EGYPT

ADAM AND HIS GENERATIONS

Genesis 1-5

The Creation of the World

The first two chapters of Genesis give a very simple and poetic story of the creation. At the command of God and through the power of the Spirit there was a gradual, spontaneous unfolding of nature, step by step, up to the creation of man in the very image and glory of God himself. Man thus created was given large opportunities and responsibilities. He was commanded to multiply and fill the earth (1: 28); he was given dominion over the earth (1: 28; Psa. 8: 5-9); he was placed into the Garden of Eden and there given opportunities of service and moral development under the responsibility of choosing or refusing (2: 8-17).

Climax of the Creation

The Fall

Failing to appreciate their blessings, Adam and his wife followed the advice of Satan, who appealed to Eve through the subtlety of the serpent (3: 1-6). In turning away and following the Tempter rather than Jehovah they forfeited their right to the blessings of the garden and the Tree of Life and were driven out to toil and struggle for their existence (3: 16-24). And thus being barred from the Tree of Life death was sure to follow. But even amidst this gloom there was a ray of hope of final victory (3: 15).

Sequel of the Fall

The fall marked out dark forebodings for the history of the world. Cain, who stood next to his father on the genealogical record, proved himself to be unworthy of being in the lineage of the faithful by slaying his brother Abel (4: 1-8), and instead of standing in the line of the good he became the head of a lineage of wicked people (4: 16-24).

Seth, on the other hand, succeeded Adam in the lineage of those that called on the name of Jehovah in worship (4: 25, 26). Enoch, who walked with God three hundred years, and then walked with God and was not, is a strong example of his age (5: 22; Jude 14, 15). This line of Seth became the nucleus of the genealogical record of the faithful of the Bible (1 Chron. 1: 1-4; Luke 3: 36-38).

The Line of Seth

NOAH AND HIS GENERATIONS

Genesis 6-11

Through the intermarriage of the sons of God (the Sethites) and the daughters of men (the Cainites) sin received a strong impetus and became almost universal in the world. To save the world from entire demoralization Jehovah brought a deluge upon all excepting faithful Noah and his family, whom he saved through the means of the ark (cf. 2 Peter 2: 5 and 1 Peter 3: 20, 21). His three sons each became the head of a distinct genealogical line, as is seen in chapter 10. They were scattered far and wide through the world by the providence of God, as chapter 11 reveals. Up to this time the people seemed to have lived in the Tigris-Euphrates valley.

Faithful Noah

The Deluge

The Dispersion

ABRAHAM AND HIS GENERATIONS

Genesis 12-50

God now called a man out of the tribe of Shem, Noah's son, to become the example and head of a peculiar people, separate from the nations of the world. He appeared to Abraham at Ur of the Chaldees, the ancient

Abraham Called

capital of Babylonia, called him to leave his homeland and people (12: 1, Acts 7: 2-6), and promised to make him the father of many people and a blessing to all the nations of the world.

Step by Step

Abraham heeded this call and, in strong faith, step by step, he followed Jehovah's leading. He had his promise renewed and even strengthened under a covenant. To the continual evidences of God he responded by erecting altars and making offerings of gratitude and consecration (12: 7; 12: 8; 13: 4; 13: 18; 21: 33). His life was one of nomadic sojourn in Palestine, the future land of promise. His faithfulness became a strong example for all the ages of the world, and the large promise and covenant of world-wide range is alone being realized in the Christian age (Rom. 4: 16-18; Gal. 3: 16).

Abraham's Descendants

Abraham's descendants, under the headship of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, were faithful to the trust of their father and kept themselves from the idolatrous practices of their age, and looked forward toward the fulfillment of the promises Jehovah had made.

Under a chain of providences, that seemed adverse and were yet a blessing, the people were transferred into Egypt where, for four hundred years, they endured the hardships of Egyptian slavedom. Here in the face of all their adversities they grew into a small nation (Gen. 15: 12-16; Acts 7: 9-18).

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. What important climax appears in the story of creation?
2. Name several large opportunities given to man in the creation.
3. In what way were these opportunities abused?
4. Name several evident results of sin.
5. Give the underlying purpose of the deluge.

6. What great importance attaches itself to the call of Abraham?

7. What large virtue appears in Abraham's life?

8. Trace out the journey of Abraham on the map.

9. Under what circumstances did the people take up their abode in Egypt?

10. Write out a brief sketch of the main events of each one of the three divisions of the patriarchal period.

Lesson III

The Old Testament

THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT AND THE JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF PROMISE

Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy

The Pentateuch

These books form a unit in the history of God's people. Together with Genesis they are called the Pentateuch, or the five books of Moses. The book of Genesis alone covers a period of nearly twenty-five hundred years. These four books, omitting the introduction to Exodus, cover a period of only about forty years.

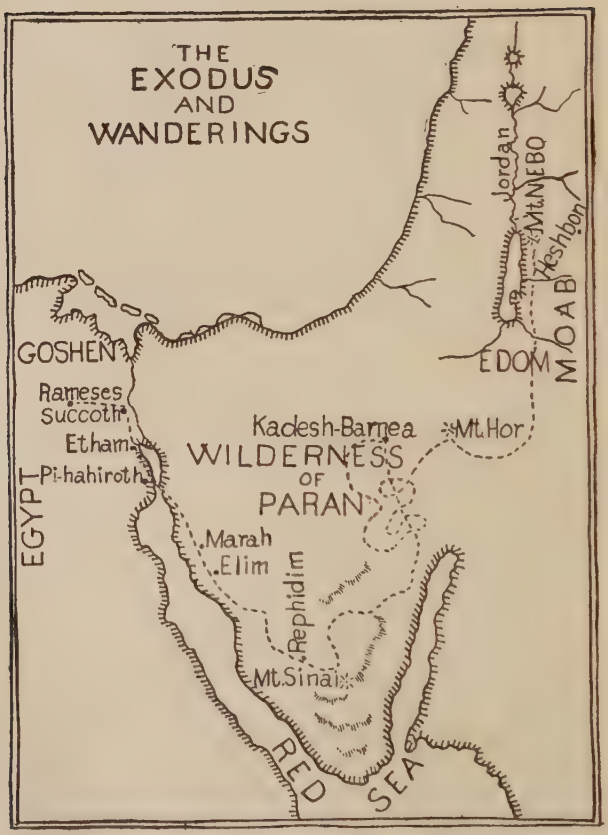
General Outline

This period falls naturally into four sections:

1. The Exodus. Ex. 1-18.
2. Receiving the law. Ex. 19-40; Lev. 1-27; Num. 1 to 10: 10.
3. Wanderings in the Wilderness. Num. 10: 11 to 19: 22.
4. The journey to the Promised Land. Num. 20-36; Deut. 1-34.

Suggestive Readings

1. The severe bondage in Egypt. Ex. 1: 8-22.
2. The early life of Moses. Ex. 2: 1-15.
3. The call and commission of Moses. Ex. 3: 1-12.
4. Moses and Aaron convincing the Israelites. Ex. 4: 27-31.
5. Moses and Aaron doing miracles to convince Pharaoh. Ex. 7: 8-13, 20-25; 8: 1-7, 16-19, 20-24; 9: 1-7; 8-12, 22-26; 10: 12-20, 21-29; 12: 29-36.
6. The guidance of the pillars of cloud and fire. Ex. 13: 17-22; Num. 9: 15-23.


THE
EXODUS
AND
WANDERINGS
Jordan
Mt. NEBO
Heshbon
MOAB
GOSHEN
EDOM
Rameses
Succoth
Etham
Pi-hahiroth
EGYPT
Kadesh-Barnea
Mt. Hor
WILDERNESS
OF
PARAN
Marah
Elim
Rephidim
Mt. Sinai
RED
SEA

7. **The Law of God. Ex. 20: 1-26.**
8. The tabernacle made. Ex. 40: 1-38.
9. Moses' exhortation. Deut. 8: 1-20.
10. Moses' farewell song. Deut. 32: 1-43.
11. Moses' blessing. Deut. 33: 1-29.

THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT

Exodus 1-18

According to Promise

In harmony with the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 15: 13, 14), God delivered his people out of the bondage of Egypt. He prepared Moses, a man of the house of Levi, to mediate between himself and his people in this deliverance.

Moses

Moses was a great man who, after having lived forty years in the courts of Pharaoh and forty years in the Wilderness of Midian, was called by Jehovah and commissioned to the great task (Ex. 3: 1-12).

Great Evidences

In company with Aaron, his brother, he laid before the elders of Israel Jehovah's plan of deliverance and convinced them of the sincerity of his message by the signs Jehovah gave them to do in their presence (Ex. 4: 27-31). Having gained consent of the elders of Israel they worked a series of mighty miracles to gain consent of freedom from Pharaoh and his people (Ex. chaps. 5-12). This group of miracles became one of the greatest landmarks of the old dispensation. Prophets never ceased to point back to these events as evidence of the divine love and power of God. The passover, instituted in connection with one of these miracles (12: 1-33), became a regular annual festal occasion and a standing type of the sacrifice of Christ of the new dispensation (1 Cor. 5: 7).

When the deliverance was finally accomplished the

journey was made from Egypt toward the southeast to Mount Sinai in about three months (19: 1). It was made under the guidance of the pillars of cloud and fire (13: 21, 22), and in the continuous manifestations of the miraculous power of God (14: 21-31; 15: 22-26; 16: 13-20; 17: 5-7, and 17: 8-16).

The Exodus

RECEIVING THE LAW

Ex. 19-40, Lev. 1-27, Num. 1 to 10: 10

Up to this time, for about twenty-five hundred years, the simple forms of patriarchal religion prevailed. The father, as the head of the family, was both the ruler and priest of his tribe. Circumcision was observed as a token of God's covenant (Gen. 17: 9-14; 22-27). God revealed his will to men through visions and dreams (Gen. 20: 3; 28: 12-17; 31: 24), and through the ministry of angels (Gen. 16: 7; chapters 18, 19).

The sacrifice of animal life upon the altar was a common mode of expressing gratitude (Gen. 4: 4; 8: 20-22; 12: 7, 8; 13: 4, 18). Men had free access to Jehovah through the medium of prayer (Gen. 4: 26; 20: 7, 17; 24: 12-14; 32: 9-12).

One year's encampment under the shadow of Mt. Sinai brought God's people into a new era of religious life. The simple laws and rites of the patriarchal age gave way to an elaborate system of laws and ceremonies which God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 20: 1-26). This was a moral code of ten commandments written on two tables of stone, which was the basis, on the one hand, of a large ethical system (Ex. 21-24), generally known as judicial laws, and on the other hand, of a ceremonial law, which called forth a complex system of worship (Ex. 25-31).

The Mosaic Covenant

Religious and Ethical

Priesthood

The books of Leviticus and Numbers give further details of these institutions. Before leaving Sinai they arranged a Levitical priesthood under the leadership of Aaron and his sons, and worked out in detail the tabernacle and its utensils (Ex. 35-40).

Types and Shadows

Many of these institutions and rites carried with them strong typical significance for the new spiritual dispensation of our own time (Heb. 8: 5; 10: 1).

THE WANDERINGS IN THE WILDERNESS

Numbers 10: 11 to 19: 22

Moving On

After receiving the law and building the tabernacle they moved northward under the guidance of the pillars of cloud and fire toward the Land of Promise (Num. 10: 11-13). A journey of eleven days brought them to Kadesh Barnea, lying on the southern edge of Palestine (Deut. 1: 2).

Twelve Spies

From here they sent spies to gain information concerning the actual conditions of the land (Num. 13: 1-24). These brought back a unanimous report that the land surely flowed with milk and honey, but that it also contained strong people and strongly-walled cities (Num. 13: 25-29). Two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua, urged the people to trust in the power of God and take the land, in harmony with the promise, but the rest of the spies discouraged the people and caused a revolt (Num. 13: 30-33).

Strong Revolt

In the face of all the miracles of mercy Jehovah had continually wrought for them, ever since they decided to leave Egypt, they murmured and longed to get back

to their Egyptian home of bondage. This rash uprising seemed to reach a climax of intolerance, for from here Jehovah turned them back to wander in the wilderness until a new generation should spring up (Num. 14: 20-35).

Forty Years

THE JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF PROMISE

Num. 20-36; Deut. 1-34

After nearly forty years of wandering about in the semi-desert land of the peninsula of Sinai they were finally directed northward and eastward through the lands of Edom and Moab to the eastern plains of the Jordan River (Num. 20: 22; 21: 4; 10-20).

Reaching Palestine

They found enemies all along the way, but Jehovah turned the curses of the enemy into blessings (Num. 22-24). Many of them took up the idolatry of the Moabites, but were severely punished by Jehovah.

The work of Moses was now finished, but before he left them he gave them a series of farewell discourses. These discourses are recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. He reviews the long journey just completed and points out very vividly how God continually manifested his love and mighty power to them, and how they ought faithfully to bend every effort to respond to his love by their obedience to the law he had given them. He also reveals the spiritual import of this law. He warns the people not to follow the evils of the people whose land they are about to take. He also strongly urges them to make a complete conquest of the land (Num. 33: 50-56). He himself takes one longing glance at the country from Mt. Pisgah and, pronouncing a beautiful blessing upon the people, commits them into the hands of Joshua and to the power of Jehovah (Deut. 32, 33, 34).

Moses' Farewell

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. Name the four main divisions of the period.
2. Give the names of the important characters.
3. Trace out the journey of Israel on the map. (Note the review of the journey. Num. 33: 1-49.)
4. In what way did Jehovah appeal to the people continually?
5. What attitude did the people assume toward Jehovah all the way?
6. What was the result of the year's stay at Mt. Sinai?
7. What important event followed the report of the spies at Kadesh Barnea?
8. Give some of the important characteristics of Moses.
9. What is the nature of the book of Deuteronomy?

Lesson IV

The Old Testament

THE CONQUEST

Joshua and Judges

The Canaanites

The land of Palestine which, five hundred years before, had been promised to Abraham as a home for his people (Gen. 12: 7; 13: 14-17), was still occupied by several small heathen nations. They had, however, become so corrupt as to forfeit all right to the land (Lev. 18: 24-30; Deut. 12: 29-32).

Abraham's Family

The progeny of Abraham had grown from a single family into twelve tribes, comprising a small nation of two million people. They were now on the eastern plains of the Jordan, with nothing but the river between them and the country which was to be their home.

General Outlook

The books of Joshua and Judges give a record of the conquest and settlement of the people in their new home covering a period of over four hundred years.

The period falls into two sections, each book covering a section of its own:

1. The general conquest.—Joshua.
2. The conquest under the Judges.—Judges.

Suggestive Readings

1. The sinful condition of the Canaanites. Lev. 18: 24-30; Deut. 12: 29-32.

2. The land promised to Abraham. Gen. 13: 14-18; 15: 15, 16.

3. Joshua as a faithful associate of Moses. Ex. 17: 8-16; 24: 13, 14; Num. 27: 15-23; Deut. 34: 9.

4. Jehovah's commission to Joshua. Joshua 1: 1-9.
5. Crossing of the Jordan. Joshua 3: 1-17.
6. Preparing for the conquest. Joshua 5: 2-15.
7. Jericho taken. Joshua 6: 1-21.
8. Failing because of sin. Joshua 7: 10-26.
9. A review of the conquest. Joshua 12: 1-24.
10. The peculiar allotment of the Levites. Num. 35: 1-8; Joshua 21: 1-3.
11. Joshua's farewell words. Joshua 24: 1-28.
12. The people failing to complete the conquest. Judges 1: 16-36.
13. The people warned of their evils. Judges 2: 1-23.

THE GENERAL CONQUEST

Joshua

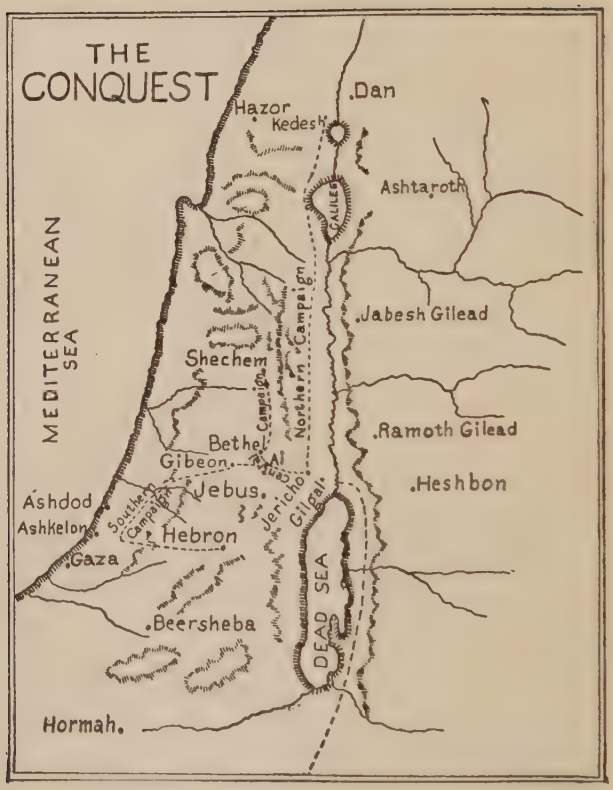
The Leader

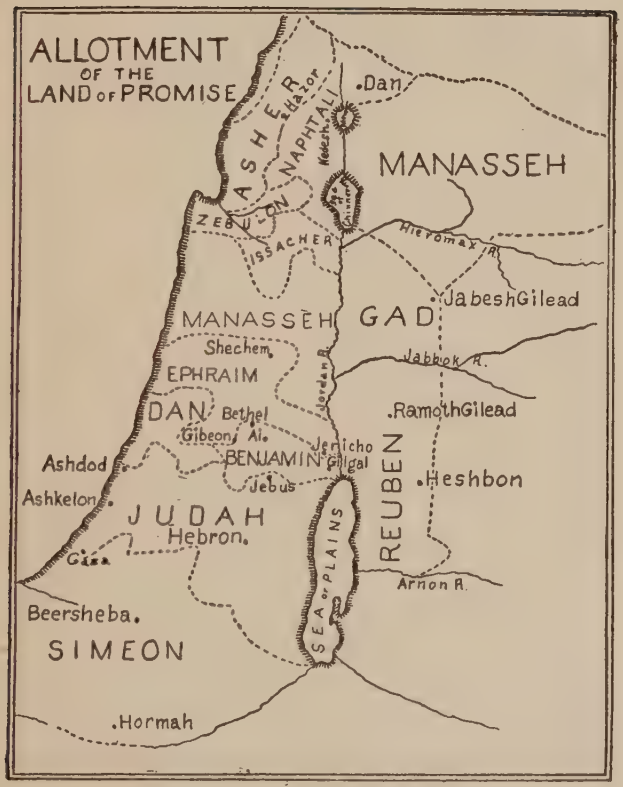
Joshua, who had come all the way from Egypt and had been a faithful minister of Moses (Ex. 24: 13, 14; 17: 8-16), was set apart as the successor of Moses and the leader in the great conquest. He was a man full of the Spirit of God and of wisdom (Deut. 34: 9; Num. 27: 15-23), and was a man of genuine valor.

General Outline

The book of Joshua divides into two main sections, with an introduction and conclusion. Chapters 1-12 contain a record of the conquest, while 13-24 mention the division of the land and the settlement of the tribes.

The first five chapters of the first section form an appropriate introduction, in which Jehovah gives Joshua his commission and strong exhortation and encouragement to faithfulness (1: 1-9), and Joshua makes all necessary preparation for the conquest: He asks the two and a half tribes, whose allotment was on the east


THE CONQUEST
Hazor
Kedesh
.Dan
Ashtaroth
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Northern Campaign
.Jabesh Gilead
Shechem
Bethel
Al
Gibeon
.Ramoth Gilead
.Heshbon
Ashdod
Ashkelon
Southern Campaign
Jebus
Jericho
Gilgal
Hebron
Gaza
DEAD SEA
.Beersheba
Hormah.


ALLOTMENT
OF THE
LAND OF PROMISE
Dan
ASHER
NAPHTALI
Hazor
Kedesh
MANASSEH
ZEBULON
ISSACHER
Hieromax R.
Jabesh Gilead
MANASSEH
GAD
Shechem
EPHRAIM
Jordan R.
Jabbok R.
DAN
Bethel
Gibeon
Ai
Jericho
Gilgal
Ramoth Gilead
Ashdod
BENJAMIN
Jebus
Heshbon
Ashkelon
JUDAH
Hebron
REUBEN
Gaza
Arnon R.
SEA OF PLAINS
Beersheba
SIMEON
Hormah

of the Jordan River (Num. 32: 1-5), to accompany them in the conquest (Joshua 1: 12-18); and he sends out spies (Joshua 2: 1-24).

Entering the Land

While Jehovah opens the way through the river, swelled beyond its limits by the winter rain, the people walked boldly over into the very face of the enemy. They set up memorial stones; they observed the rite of circumcision; and kept the passover in memory of their deliverance from Egypt. Jehovah now gave Joshua a final assurance of victory (5: 13-15).

The conquest proper falls into three distinct sections: A central (chapters 6-9), a southern (chapter 10), a northern (chapter 11).

Jericho Taken

1. Taking Jericho, the stronghold in the plains of the Jordan, by means of a great Divine intervention, they were emboldened to move up through a deep ravine into the very heart of the land, to Bethel, so sacred in the journeys of Abraham. Although they were temporarily repulsed at Ai on account of sin (7: 2-26), yet they moved forward in great victories through the power of Jehovah. In harmony with the request of Moses (Deut. 27: 1-8), Joshua built an altar on Mt. Ebal and reviewed the Law (8: 30-35).

Campaign to the South

2. These great victories called forth an allied effort by the kings of the southern part of the country to put down Joshua and his men, but they were completely defeated, and not only so, but Joshua made a large conquering campaign through the south (chapter 10).

3. Joshua now turned toward the north and made a successful raid through that part of the country (chap-

Campaign to the North

ter 11). A brief review of the entire conquest thus far, both on the east and west sides of the Jordan, is recorded in chapter 12. These efforts must have taken a number of years, but all the way Jehovah was with them, just as he had promised (1: 9).

Land Allotment

Joshua's age now demanded a change in plans, and so he divided the land amongst the tribes, that the tribes might be individually responsible for the conquest of their own territory (13: 1-7; 23: 4-13). A general plan of the allotment had already been given by Moses (Num. 34: 16-29).

Farewell Advice

Joshua, like Moses, gave his people, in his closing days, much instruction, encouragement, and warning (23, 24), and left them a rich legacy in the faithful example of his own life.

THE CONQUEST UNDER THE JUDGES

Much Yet to Do

After the death of Joshua there was yet much land to be taken (Joshua 13: 1), and there were grave problems to be solved: The people were scattered through the land without a common leader; they were gradually changing from the life of the wandering nomad to that of a settled agricultural people; their enemies were many and fierce; and their social contact with their heathen neighbors brought them into the severest temptations of the grossest forms of idolatry and immorality.

The book of Judges falls into two main divisions: Chapters 1 to 16 form the first, and chapters 17-21 the

General Divisions

second; but to the last, the book of Ruth may properly also be appended. The introduction (1 to 3: 6) of the first section stands out in strong contrast to what Jehovah had asked them to do (Deut. 7: 1-5; 20: 1-18). It casts a shadow over the entire book, indeed, such a gloom as hangs over no other book of the Bible. The series of **nots** (1: 19-36) are a fitting index to the entire book. These failures account for the sins so vividly portrayed in chapters 2: 6 to 3: 6, and for the severe rebuke of the angel (2: 1-5).

Great Failures

The simple schedule for the first half of the book is:

1. The people sinned.
2. They were brought under the bondage of the neighboring nations.
3. They cried in penitence for relief.
4. Jehovah sent them a deliverer, a judge who, by the power of the Spirit of God, broke the yoke of their bondage. This experience repeats itself again and again. We thus have as Judges:

The Judges

Othniel, 3: 7-11; Ehud, 3: 12-30; Shamgar, 3: 31; Barak and Deborah, 4, 5; Gideon, 6: 1 to 8: 32; Abimelech, 8: 33 to 9: 57; Tola, 10: 1, 2; Jair, 10: 3-5; Jephthah, 10: 6 to 12: 7; Ibzan, 12: 8-10; Elon, 12: 11, 12; Abdon, 12: 13-15; Samson, 13-16.

These men, like the great prophets of the later days, were divinely called and they sprang often very suddenly upon the scene of action. They were really great men of their age, although we cannot measure them by the higher standards of later life.

Two Events

The last half of the book (17-21) records two incidents that show on the one hand the corruption of this age and on the other hand the great fact that there was at work a leaven of higher ideals and truer life.

Story of Ruth

The book of Ruth records a beautiful story of home life, which stands out in strong contrast with much of the life of that age. The last paragraph of the book (4: 13-22) makes it evident that the story was intended to give the lineage leading up to David. It thus furnishes the link in chronology antecedent to David and Christ (Matt. 1: 3-6).

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. Describe the condition of Palestine prior to the conquest.
2. What preparation had Joshua as a leader in the conquest?
3. Name the main points in the commission Jehovah gives Joshua.
4. Give several important events immediately prior to the beginning of the conquest.
5. Trace out on the map the three main divisions of the conquest.
6. Locate the various tribes according to their allotment.
7. What great failure lies at the bottom of the many defeats during the period of the judges?
8. Under what condition did Jehovah send them deliverers?
9. What was the religious condition of God's people during the period of the judges?
10. Of what other class of men do the judges remind us?

Lesson V

The Old Testament

THE RISE AND PROSPERITY OF THE KINGDOM

1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles

The troublous times of the conquest and judges continued on into the administration of Samuel. Samuel was both a judge and a prophet, and while he is the last in the line of the judges, he is the first in the series of prophets who stood for so much in the later history of Israel (Acts 13: 20, 3: 24). The corruptions of idolatry, avarice, and sensuality, so common in the period of the judges, had now come even into the priestly ranks (1 Sam. 2: 22-36).

Samuel

Evils

The tabernacle of Moses was still at Shiloh, where Joshua had pitched it (Joshua 18: 1). Here in the face of the prevailing corruption, at least some of the devout people came regularly for worship (1 Sam. 1: 3, 21). Out of this faithful circle came Samuel, who stands out prominently as one of the greatest men of the Old Dispensation.

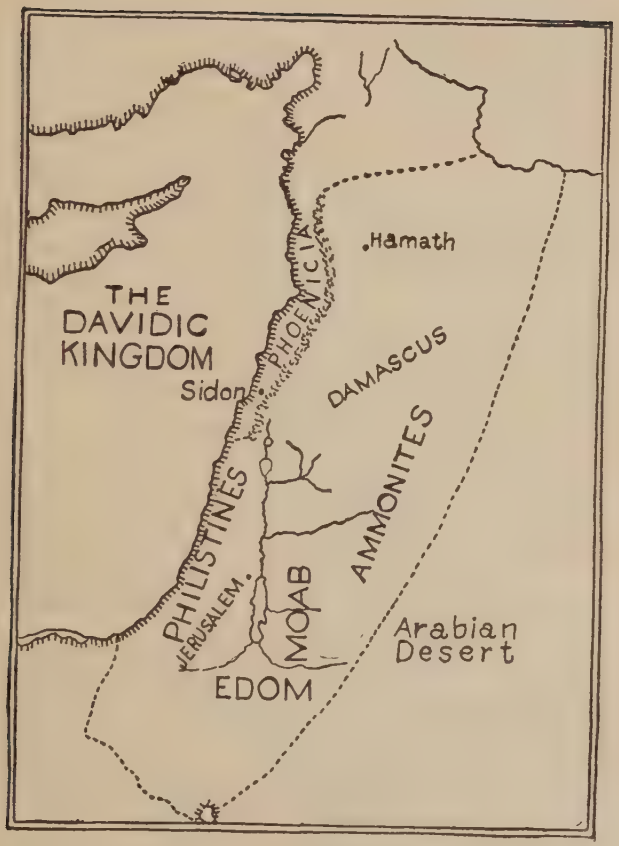
The Tabernacle Still at Shiloh

This period marks the formal beginning of the Kingdom of God, the nucleus of which was already begun in the call of Abraham.

General Outline

The period falls into two main sections:

1. The rise of the kingdom. 1 Samuel.
2. The kingdom in prosperity. 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles.


THE
DAVIDIC
KINGDOM
Sidon
PHOENICIA
Hamath
DAMASCUS
PHILISTINES
JERUSALEM
MOAB
AMMONITES
Arabian
Desert
EDOM

Suggestive Readings

1. The devotion of Hannah, the mother of Samuel. 1 Sam. 1: 1-18.
2. The child Samuel consecrated to the Lord. 1 Sam. 1: 21 to 2: 11.
3. The wickedness of Eli's sons. 1 Sam. 2: 12-17, 22-26.
4. The warning to the house of Eli. 1 Sam. 2: 27-36.
5. Samuel's early call and ministry. 1 Sam. 2: 18-21, 3: 1 to 4: 1.
6. Calling for a king. 1 Sam. 8: 1-22.
7. Saul, falling into sin, is condemned. 1 Sam. 15: 1-23.
8. David the anointed of God. 1 Sam. 16: 6-13; 2 Sam. 2: 1-4; 5: 1-5; 23: 1-7.

THE RISE OF THE KINGDOM

1 Samuel

A Life Consecrated

The first twelve chapters of 1 Samuel reveal the wise administration of Samuel. The first two chapters, giving the account of his birth, consecration, early life and call to service, have in all the ages been considered to be ideals. They ought to be written on the walls of every home.

Rigid Reforms

The people suffered severe defeat by the Philistines and were robbed of the Ark of the Covenant (4: 1-11). Bravely Samuel severely rebuked the house of Eli (3: 10-18), began a rigid reform amongst his people, and defeated the Philistine enemy (7: 3-14).

Judge, Prophet and Priest

In addition to Samuel's work as a judge and prophet he also exercised in the priestly service when once the priesthood had become so corrupted as to be overthrown (4: 12-18; 7: 3-11).

Throughout his entire life Samuel thus faithfully served his people. He made regular annual circuits throughout the land (7: 15-17). His sons, however, instead of following in his footsteps, like Eli's sons proved themselves unworthy to serve in the office of their father (8: 1-3).

Unfaithful Sons

This unfaithfulness of his sons afforded the people an occasion for calling for a king. But Samuel, fearing that the people would thus be estranged from God, and would follow the practice of the surrounding nations in worshiping their king instead of God, put up a strong protest (8: 4-9). Nevertheless, after carefully warning them of the danger of this course, he, at the command of God, anointed Saul to be their king (8: 10-18; 10: 1-27).

Calling for a King

Saul Anointed

Samuel's service did not close with the opening of Saul's reign, but as a prophet of God he was, through the reign of Saul, always ready to guard the moral interests of the kingdom.

Chapters thirteen to thirty-one are a record of the ministry of Saul, the first king of Israel. At the beginning of his reign Saul proved himself a strong leader under the influences of the Spirit of God (10: 6, 9, 10; 11: 6), in thrusting back the enemies of Israel and enlarging the borders of the kingdom (14: 47, 48).

Faithful for a While

These successes were, however, too much for him, for, failing to recognize Jehovah as the source of his strength, he soon took all honors to himself (15: 4-9). For this sin he forfeited his right to the throne

Failure Follows Success

and fell under the severe rebuke and judgment of the prophet (15: 10-23).

David Anointed

It was then that Samuel went quietly to Bethlehem, at the command and guidance of Jehovah, and there anointed the boy David to be king instead of Saul (16: 1-13).

Saul's Decline

From that time on Saul met defeat after defeat and allowed the evil spirit to control him so completely that most of his time and effort were consumed in attempting to kill David, the newly-anointed king. Every effort of this continued rage of jealousy was thwarted by Jehovah's tender watch-care over David.

THE KINGDOM IN PROSPERITY

2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles

David in Preparation

David, after his anointing at Bethlehem (1 Sam. 16: 13), had a severe schooling at the hand of Saul, and the conflict did not entirely close even at the death of Saul. The heirs and friends of Saul were loath to see his family lose the throne to which God had called David.

Anointed Again and Again

The first four chapters record David's final conflict in reaching the throne. He was anointed at Hebron over Judah (2: 3, 4), and seven and a half years later, at the same place, he was anointed over all Israel (5: 1-5).

Prosperous Reign

2 Samuel, chapters 5-10, and 1 Chronicles, chapters 11-19, record the prosperous reign of David. During this time the kingdom reached practically its climax. David took the Jebusitic stronghold, Jerusalem, to become his capital and, bringing hither

the Ark of the Covenant, made this the religious center of God's people.

2 Samuel 11-19 marks a sad epoch in David's reign and life. He fell into sin and for several years after, trouble followed trouble, both in the home and the state, until the administration was almost taken from him, but through the kind providence of God and the faithful service of the prophet Nathan he was brought into deep repentance and was again established (2 Sam. 12: 1-23).

Sin and Trouble

The last chapters of 2 Sam. 20-24 and 1 Chron. 22-29 tell of the prosperity of the closing days of his reign, during which he made elaborate preparations for the building of a temple for Jehovah.

Restored Again

David was a great man. His administrative ability is seen in the way he developed the kingdom. He gathered together the scattered tribes into a single unit. He enlarged the borders of the kingdom and instilled such a spirit of devotion that it became a strong type of the spiritual kingdom of our own day.

A Great Man

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. Give the condition of the people in the days of Eli.
2. Give the providences entering into the early life of Samuel.
3. What was the official capacity of Samuel?
4. Under what conditions was the kingdom established?
5. What caused Saul's downfall?
6. By whom and under what circumstances was David anointed?

7. What serious trouble had David after he began to reign?

8. What can you say of David's kingdom?

9. What was the ground of David's success?

10. Compare the map of the Davidic kingdom with the one indicating the allotment of the land, and note the contrast.

Lesson VI

The Old Testament

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE KINGDOM

Sources

First and Second Kings and Second Chronicles, and the books of the prophets: Jonah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Habakkuk, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah.

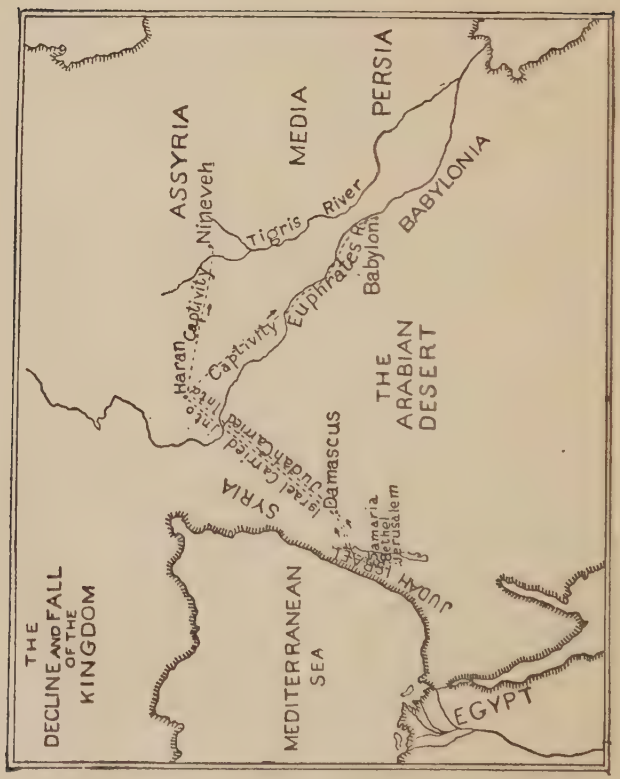
Contrast with the Past

The condition of Israel at the opening of this period was quite different from what it was eighty or a hundred years before this time. In those days there was little or no unity amongst the tribes; every individual did as it seemed right in his own eyes (Judges 17: 6). Then, too, they were hard pressed by their enemies, both by those who were in their midst and by the surrounding nations. But now they were united under a common head, they had a central place of worship, and no enemy encroached upon them. They had taken a long step toward the ideal laid out for them in the book of Deuteronomy (Deut. 17: 14-20).

The Two Books of Kings a Unit

The two books of the Kings give a continuous account of the kingdom from the time it was in the height of its glory until it was lost in captivity. In the ancient Hebrew record these two books were one. They probably were divided for convenience in synagogue service.

Second Chronicles is a fitting complement of these books, but deals mainly with matters pertaining to Jerusalem. The books of the prophets are also vitally connected with this age, giving the record of the lives and the messages of the later prophets.


THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE KINGDOM
ASSYRIA
Nineveh
MEDIA
PERSIA
Tigris River
BABYLONIA
Babylon
Euphrates R.
Captivity
Captivity
Haran
Captivity
THE ARABIAN DESERT
Israel Carried Into
Judah Carried Into
Damascus
SYRIA
Samaria
Jerusalem
JUDAH
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
EGYPT

General Outline

This period falls into two main divisions:

1. Luxury and idolatry in the kingdom. 1 Kings 1-11, and 2 Chronicles 1-9.

2. The decline and fall of the kingdom. 1 Kings 12; 2 Kings 25, and 2 Chron. 10: 36.

Suggestive Readings

1. Solomon anointed king. 1 Chron. 23: 1; 29: 22-25.

2. Solomon's great inaugural. 1 Kings 3: 4-15.

3. Solomon dedicating the temple. 1 Kings 8: 22-53.

4. Great luxury in the kingdom. 1 Kings 10: 14-29.

5. Solomon's great failure. 1 Kings 11: 1-8.

6. Judgment pronounced against the kingdom. 1 Kings 11: 9-13; and 29-36.

7. The rash boast of Rehoboam. 1 Kings 12: 1-20.

8. The grave departure of Jeroboam. 1 Kings 12: 25-33.

9. The great appeal of Elijah. 1 Kings 18: 25-46.

10. The great appeal of Amos. Amos 2: 6-16.

11. Israel carried away into captivity. 2 Kings 17: 1-18; 18: 9-12.

12. The wickedness of Judah. Isaiah 1: 2-9.

13. The wickedness of both Israel and Judah. Ezekiel 8: 7-18.

14. The great appeal of Isaiah. Isa. 1: 10-20.

15. The great appeal of Jeremiah. Jer. 9: 1-26.

16. Jerusalem destroyed and the people carried away. 2 Kings 25: 1-21.

LUXURY AND IDOLATRY IN THE KINGDOM

1 Kings 1-11; 2 Chronicles 1-9

Probably no king ever ascended the throne under brighter prospects than Solomon. David, his father, had made large conquests, established a splendid government, developed plans and gathered materials for the temple he so much desired to build for Jehovah (1 Chron. 29: 1-22).

Solomon's Opportunity

Solomon needed but to brush away a few of the contestants of the throne (1 Kings 1, 2), to find his land in general peace (1 Kings 4: 25). His inaugural sacrifice and prayer at Gibeon (1 Kings 3: 4-9) called forth a strong response from Jehovah in promise of blessing (1 Kings 3: 10-15; 2 Chron. 1: 6-13).

He at once began building the temple (1 Kings 5, 6, 7), and as riches increased he did much building throughout his kingdom (1 Kings 9; 2 Chron. 11). He grew into national fame and favor and formed many alliances with the heathen nations by marrying the royal daughters. This he did in direct protest to the admonition of Moses (Deut. 17: 14-17).

A Great Builder

Foreign Alliances

He burdened the people with taxes for the support of his palace and harem, and set up all kinds of idols to satisfy the vain desires of his heathen wives and allies (1 Kings 11: 1-13). In fact, he brought upon his kingdom such a train of evils the end of which was not seen down to the days of captivity. The kingdom which might have been wrought out into marvelous glory was brought to the very verge of destruction (1 Kings 11: 29-40).

Luxury and Burdens

THE GRADUAL DECLINE AND FALL OF THE KINGDOM

1 Kings 12; 2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 10-36

Kingdom Torn in Two

In accord with the judgment pronounced against Solomon (1 Kings 11: 9-13, 29-39), the kingdom was divided; ten tribes, revolting from the sullen, tyrannical boast of Rehoboam, the heir to the throne (1 Kings 12: 1-15), followed Jeroboam, a former general of Solomon's army, while the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained with Rehoboam (1 Kings 12: 16-24).

Jeroboam's Grave Departure

Jeroboam, striving to estrange the people from Jerusalem and their mode of worship, established himself in the northern part of Palestine and set up two golden calves through which to worship Jehovah, and changed the order of the priesthood and the time of the fall festal service (1 Kings 12: 25-33). This was a long step toward the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, gods with all the gross idolatry and sensuality his kingdom adopted later on (Amos 2: 6-8; 1 Kings 16: 25-34).

The Prophets Protest

This sinful departure was strongly protested by Jehovah through his faithful prophets. Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, and several other prophets did their best under the guidance and strength of the Spirit of God to turn the tide and save the people from utter demoralization, but in the face of all that could be done one dynasty followed another from bad to worse, until finally, in 722 B. C., Assyria, the great eastern world power, carried them away into captivity (2 Kings 18: 9-14).

Israel's Captivity

On the other hand Rehoboam, with his two tribes,

remained at Jerusalem, but his religious convictions were no more true than were those of Jeroboam (1 Kings 14: 21-24). Other kings of Judah followed in the footsteps of their wicked predecessors, and in the sins of idolatry they even rivaled their heathen neighbors (2 Chron. 28: 2-4, 33: 2-9).

Good Kings and Prophets

There were, however, a number of good kings, some of whom were real reformers of their age. Such men as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah were a savor of life to their people, but, back of them, and between them and God, stood the faithful prophets, pleading day and night for loyalty and true manhood. Joel, Obediah, Isaiah, Micah, Habakkuk, Nahum, Zephaniah and Jeremiah lost no opportunity in warning the wicked and comforting the good and making the way of Jehovah plain before the people. They did not hesitate, even in the face of martyrdom. But sadly their messages were spurned and they were persecuted.

Judah's Captivity

Finally, when there was no hope of saving the nation, Jehovah allowed Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to destroy the city and temple and carry the people away into captivity (2 Kings 25: 8-21; 2 Chron. 36: 11-21).

The Hope of the Future

The good people—for there were all along those both in Israel and Judah who were faithful—were not left without hope, for the prophets gave the strongest assurance that a remnant would be allowed to return to rebuild the temple and city. So glowing were the pictures of this hope that we are now, in this age of the spiritual kingdom, just beginning to realize what the promise meant.

The Royal Lineage

The kingdom of Judah providentially maintained its royal line unbroken, while on the other hand Israel, out of nineteen kings, had its line broken into nine dynasties. This unbroken line of Judah afforded a direct royal descent for the Kingship of Jesus, the Head of the Kingdom of God.

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. What was the condition of the kingdom when Solomon began to reign?
2. In what way did Solomon fail?
3. Why was the kingdom divided?
4. What serious departure did Jeroboam take?
5. What was the religious condition of Judah?
6. What was the mission of the prophets?
7. Name some of the important prophets of the northern division of the kingdom.
8. Name some of the important prophets of the southern division of the kingdom.
9. Name some important kings who were reformers.
10. What finally became of the northern people?
11. What finally became of the southern people?
12. Trace out on the map the carrying away of Israel.
13. Trace out on the map the carrying away of Judah.
14. Make a map for each of these captivities.

Lesson VII

The Age of Foreign Supremacy

Sources Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, the Apocryphal Maccabees and Josephus.

God's people had been free from foreign control ever since Moses led them from under the tyrannical hand of the Pharaohs of Egypt, excepting as, now and then, the neighboring nations brought them under temporary control in their own land. Jehovah had given them strong promises of protection and immunity from all enemies, providing they remained faithful to the covenant they had made (Deut. 7: 1-26).

God's Faithfulness

But it is sadly true that almost every page of the books of the kings and the prophets reveals a broken covenant, and this, too, in the face of the fact that the prophets never failed to warn the people and to assure them that if they continued in sin they would be scattered among the nations of the world (Deut. 4: 15-31; 28: 63, 64; Isa. 3: 1-17; Amos 2: 13-16).

Broken Covenant

This foreign control, beginning when both the north and the south were carried away, continued almost unbroken down to the coming of Christ, and even to the final destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D., when the last hope of national existence fled.

We divide this period in harmony with Daniel's interpretation of the king's dream into four periods (Dan. 2: 31-45).

Four Periods

1. The age of captivity under the Assyrian and Chaldean supremacies.
2. The restoration under the Persian supremacy.

THE RETURN FROM CAPTIVITY
ASSYRIA
Nineveh
MEDIA
PERSIA
Tigris River
Euphrates River
Babylonia River
BABYLONIA
Haran
Israel
the Jews
Return
Return
SYRIA
Damascus
Samaria
Bethel
Jerusalem
JUDAH
THE ARABIAN DESERT
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
EGYPT

3. The fierce struggle under the Grecian supremacy.
4. The coming of Christ under the Roman supremacy.

Suggestive Readings

1. God's careful instructions. Deut. 4: 15-31.
2. Nineveh condemned. Nahum 3: 1-19.
3. Ezekiel's warning in Babylon. Ezek. 33: 1-20.
4. Trials in Babylon. Dan. 1: 8-16; 3: 19-27; 6: 10-23; Psa. 137.
5. The proclamation of Cyrus. Ezra 1: 1-11.
6. The first return. Ezra chap. 2, 3; Psa. 126.
7. The second return. Ezra 8: 1-36.
8. The origin of the Samaritans. 2 Kings 17: 24-41.
9. The Samaritans and others oppose the Jews. Ezra 4: 1-24; Mark 4: 1-6.
10. Haggai and Zechariah stir up the people who are discouraged. Haggai 1: 1-11; Zech. 1: 1-6.
11. The victory of the Maccabees, "Antiquity of the Jews," by Josephus, XII: VII.

THE AGE OF CAPTIVITY UNDER THE ASSYRIAN AND CHALDEAN SUPREMACY

Israel Carried Away

Israel was carried away, 722 B. C., by the great Assyrian world power and placed into heathen cities (2 Kings 17: 1-6; 18: 9-12). Judah also suffered severely from the same source (2 Kings 18: 13 to 19: 27; Isa. 36, 37.

Nineveh Fallen

The combined forces of Media and Babylonia, in fulfillment of the strong prophecy of Nahum, brought the proud Nineveh down to the ground, and from this time on Babylonia wielded the scepter of the Eastern world powers.

Judah Carried Away

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylonia, became the mighty foe of Judah. He besieged Jerusalem and brought it under control, and finally destroyed it and carried the people away into his own land. This was not all done at one time, but there were several distinct efforts: (1) 2 Kings 24: 1; Jer. 25: 1. (2) 2 Kings 24: 10-16. (3) 2 Chron. 36: 11-21; 2 Kings 24: 18; 25: 1-27; Jer. 52: 1-11.

Prophets Pleading

While for eighteen or twenty years Nebuchadnezzar was getting hold on Judah, two prophets were faithfully pleading with the people for loyalty. Jeremiah was in Jerusalem, doing all he could to stay the hand of wickedness and thus hold off the oncoming bondage (Jer. 32-36), and during the same time Ezekiel, a young prophet, was faithful to his trust among the early captives of Babylonia (Ezek. 4, 5, 6).

When, however, there was no longer any hope of the people yielding to the multiplied calls of God, the enemy was allowed to strike a heavy blow. The severity of this can only be realized when we read carefully Jer. 52: 3-27 and the sad lamentations of Jeremiah (Lam. 1-5).

Life in Babylon

Their stay in Babylon for a period of about seventy years carried with it varied experiences. In general the people seem to have had considerable liberty. Some of the young men rose to high positions in the government, as is seen in the case of Daniel and his associates (Dan. 2: 46-49), Mordecai (Esther 10: 1-3), and Nehemiah, a cupbearer of the king (Neh. 1: 11). At times there were severe tests for those who were still faithful to the true God (Dan. 3: 19-23; 6: 16-18; Esther 3: 7-15).

While many of them became absorbed by the commercial, social and idolatrous allurements of this land others, under the influence of Ezekiel and Daniel and other faithful men of God, sadly longed for their temple and its religious environment (Psa. 74: 1-23; 137: 1-9). It was probably during this period that synagogues began to be built. They were not built to take the place of the temple in sacrificial service, but to afford a convenient place for Scripture reading and study and for prayer service. The captives almost lost all hope of ever returning to their home land. So complete was their despair at times that they are likened to a valley of dry bones needing a resurrection (Ezek. 37: 1-14).

The Faithful in Babylon

THE RESTORATION UNDER THE PERSIAN SUPREMACY

Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

As the Assyrian monarchy prided itself in its greed and sensuality (Nahum 3: 1-7), and fell at the hands of Media and Babylonia, so now the Babylonian power, having sinned away its day of grace (Isa. 13: 9-22; Dan. 5: 25-28), met its doom by the combined forces of Media and Persia under the command of Cyrus the Great.

Babylon Fallen

The downfall of Babylonia and victory for Persia proved to be a real blessing to God's people. It had been promised that the Persian supremacy would bring liberty (Isa. 44: 24 to 45: 7). Cyrus at once made a proclamation allowing the captives of various nations to return to their homes and resume their own worship (Ezra 1: 2-4 to 6: 3-5). Many of the Jews and some of the Israelites took this opportunity of getting back to the home land.

Cyrus' Proclamation

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah give graphic accounts of their return, which was conducted in groups covering considerable time. They at once began rebuilding the temple which had been so completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. This work was, however, opposed by the Samaritan people and others living adjacent to them (Ezra 4: 1-6).

Return Home

The Samaritans were a mongrel race, composed mainly of the heathen whom the Assyrians had placed in Samaria instead of the Israelites (2 Kings 17: 24-41). These people, having been taught by a priest of Israel, incorporated within their religion the Pentateuch of Moses and became a semi-converted heathen colony. Upon being refused to join in the building of the temple they began a feud that never was healed, but grew worse and worse down to the days of Christ (John 4: 9; 8: 48; Matt. 10: 5).

Samaritan Opposition

This delay in the building was displeasing to God, and he sent two prophets to arouse the people to a sense of their opportunity and duty. These prophets were Haggai and Zechariah (Hag. 1: 1-15; Zech. 1: 1-21; 6: 1-8). The people took new courage and began their building in good earnest, and as they depended upon the protecting power of God they succeeded (Zech. 4: 6, 7; Ezra 6: 13-15).

God's Warning

The temple was dedicated and the Passover was again observed (Ezra 6: 16-22), but the people drifted away from their religious moorings. While in captivity they had learned thoroughly to despise idol worship, but now again, as in the days of Solomon, they began to mingle with their heathen neighbors in intermarriage.

Temple Dedicated

Ezra's Reform

This departure which, if continued, was sure to destroy their identity, was sadly deplored by Ezra and his faithful associates (Ezra 9: 1-15). He at once inaugurated a rigid reform (Ezra 10: 1-44).

City Walls Built

The city walls were also rebuilt by the faithful efforts of Nehemiah, and the people were warned and encouraged by the labors of Malachi. The Persian power, which had spread westward even unto Egypt, and which had shown such leniency to God's people, now gave way to a mighty foe in the west.

THE FIERCE STRUGGLE UNDER THE GRECIAN SUPREMACY

Alexander's Victory

Alexander the Great, like a strong wave, swept everything before him from Macedonia and Greece to Egypt and Persia, and even to the borders of India. It was his policy to establish the Greek language, customs and religion throughout the entire world.

Alexander's Fall

In the pride of his marvelous victories he fell in debauch and left his great kingdom to be divided among four or five of his generals. Two of these divisions in particular concern us in this study. Syria was governed by the Seleucidai and Egypt by the Ptolemies.

Egyptian Control

For a long time the Jews were under the control of the Ptolemies of Egypt. Through the mildness of their administration many Jews were induced to move into Egypt. They even built a temple there after the pattern of the one in Jerusalem, and they there also translated their Hebrew Bible into the Greek lan-

guage, a book known as the LXX or Septuagint, used regularly in the days of Christ and the apostles and even today.

Syrian Control

The Jews, however, came under the control of the Syrians who formerly had their capital at Damascus, but now at Antioch, in Syria. A tyrannical king amongst them, known as Antiochus Epiphanes, attempted to force the Jews at the point of the sword to accept the great Alexandrian policy and take up the Greek religion and customs.

Greek Influence

Many of the Jews were easily persuaded to take up with the Greek life. They gave their sons and daughters Greek names and attended the theaters, races and games. These Greek sympathizers unconsciously formed the nucleus of what was afterwards known as the worldly Sadducean sect.

Sadducaic Nucleus

This sect rejected the entire Bible, excepting the first five books, and they were entirely skeptical to the spirit world and the hope of the future.

Maccabees Protest

On the other hand there were those who strongly fought this heathen innovation. They remembered the great reforms of Ezra, the faithful scribe, and they offered their lives to save their religion. One family stands out prominently above all others. It was the Asmonean family, better known as the Maccabees, or sledge-hammer people. They at once applied the hammer to the heathen altars and the sword to the people who offered on them. It was a battle of conscience—a bitter fight. Jehovah's religion was at stake. The battle was won and the temple, which had already been defiled by heathen offerings, was cleansed and

rededicated. The day of this dedication was afterward kept as a feast of dedication (John 10: 22).

Pharisaic Nucleus

The people who were thus strongly advocating Jewish orthodoxy grew into what was afterward known as the Pharisaic party, the people which so strongly opposed the great spiritual message of the Christ.

THE COMING OF CHRIST UNDER THE ROMAN SUPREMACY

The Roman power gradually gained the control of the world, and long kept it under its iron grip. Pompey in 63 B. C. conquered Jerusalem and brought it fully under Roman control. Herod, afterward known as Herod the Great, a native of Edom, gained a foothold, first in Galilee and afterward, at the permission of Rome, he became the Roman ruler at Jerusalem, 37 B. C. For forty years he held sway, often in a most tyrannical way. He was a great builder, and in the meantime in a large measure he rebuilt the temple at Jerusalem.

Herod the Great

Amongst a number of other women he married an Asmonean girl, Mariamne, and through this marriage his descendants, Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12: 1), and Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25: 23-27; 26: 1-32), are Jews.

He was unscrupulous, and occasionally had angry fits, during which he would kill people at random. He even spared not his own most beloved wife and sons. It was he that slew the infants at Bethlehem in his rage against the newborn King.

Herod's Treachery

At his death his province fell by his will into the

Herod's Will

hands of four of his sons. Archelaus, a man even worse than his father, took Samaria and Judea. (Cf. Matt. 2: 22.) Herod Antipas, who beheaded John Baptist and afterward was present at the trial of Jesus, reigned over Galilee and Perea. The other two had property further north.

Universal Peace

Rome had brought the whole world under control, and there was at this time universal peace. It was then that the Messiah was born at Bethlehem in harmony with Micah's prediction (Micah 5: 2), to establish the great kingdom which was to break in pieces all the kingdoms of the world (Dan. 2: 44, 45).

Questions and Suggestions for Study.

1. Give the four main divisions of this period.
2. What prominent events occur in these several divisions?
3. What can you say about the Samaritans?
4. Under what circumstances did the Sadducean sect arise?
5. What prominent event did much to create Pharisaism?
6. Give a brief description of Herod the Great.
7. What Herods were Jews?

INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE

Lessons VIII, IX, and X

Three very important kinds of literature have grown out of Hebrew life:

(1) The Psalter or book of hymns composed of lyric poetry.

(2) The wisdom literature found in the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles and Job, composed largely of gnomic and dramatic poetry.

(3) The prophetic literature, or books of the prophets, composed of a kind of poetic prose.

How They Came to Exist

Each of these grew out of its own peculiar environment. The Psalter, though not entirely Davidic, is a natural outgrowth of the great spiritual movement Samuel and David so strongly fostered. Thus also the wisdom literature sprang up largely during the age of Solomon, while the prophetic literature is composed of the great sermons which the prophets delivered to the people during the decline of the kingdom and the ages of the captivity and restoration following. Each of these groups of literature will be taken up in a separate lesson.

Lesson VIII

Old Testament

PSALMS

Suggestive Readings

1. Jacob blessing his sons. Gen. 49: 1-27.
2. The great song of victory. Ex. 15: 1-18.
3. The priestly blessing song. Num. 6: 24-27.
4. Balaam's blessing songs. Num. 23: 7-10; 18-24; 24: 3-9; 15-24.
5. Deborah's song of victory. Judges 5: 1-31.
6. Hannah's weaning blessing song. 1 Sam. 2: 1-10.
7. David's lament over Saul and Jonathan. 2 Sam. 1: 17-27.
8. David's great farewell song. 2 Sam. 22: 1 to 23: 7.
9. Mary's song of praise. Luke 1: 46-55.
10. Song of Zacharias. Luke 1: 68-79.

The book of Psalms is a collection of Hebrew songs regularly used in the temple service. In the old Hebrew Bible it is divided, as it now is in the American Version, into five separate books, each closing with an appropriate doxology. The groups are:

General Outline

1. 1-41, with 41: 13 as the doxology.
2. 42-72, with 72: 18, 19 as the doxology.
3. 73-89, with 89: 52 as the doxology.
4. 90-106, with 106: 48 as the doxology.
5. 107-150, with 150: 1-6 as the doxology.

These divisions seem to have been made largely for convenience in the temple service, with no marked logical sense of grouping.

The Psalter did not spring out of any single age in the history of Israel. Throughout the historical books

of the Old Testament, from Genesis to Nehemiah, there are imbedded, here and there, short poems on various phases of life--outbursts of praise or lament; songs of blessing and songs of victory. Several of these are repeated almost verbatim in the Psalms; 2 Sam. 22 is found in Psalm 18; 1 Chron. 16 is found in Psalm 105. These scattered poems plainly indicate how the Psalter grew up in Israel.

Formation of the Psalter

The Psalms were written by a number of authors, under varied circumstances in life, just as our own hymns are now written. Most of them, however, seem to have come out of the Davidic age. In fact, seventy-three out of the one hundred and fifty are, by their own headings, assigned to David, and a number of others to some of his leading singers. Some, however, were composed earlier and others much later. One is ascribed to Moses, and several evidently grew out of the Captivity and Restoration periods (74, 79, 126, 137 and others).

Authorship

It is not at all strange that David should have composed a large number of the Psalms. He was musically inclined and was skillful in music from his boyhood days (1 Sam. 15: 18-23). The experiences of his life were indeed varied and rich, as is seen, (1) in the severe persecution of jealous Saul (1 Sam. 17-31); (2) in the great conflict with the enemies of his kingdom (2 Sam 1-10); and (3) in the severe afflictions which followed his sin (2 Sam. 11-21). Under the power and inspiration of the Spirit of God he could well, with these experiences, express the sentiment so common to the Psalms. David's own statement in his farewell song (2 Sam. 23: 1-7) gives us a beautiful index, both as to the origin and contents of much of the Psalter.

David's Life

Hebrew poetry has neither the rhyme nor meter of our English poetry. In the Hebrew language, however, it has a rhythm in the length of its lines and in the sound of its words which is entirely lost in the translation. There is, however, a very important characteristic of its form that has not been seriously affected by the translation, known as parallelism. A phrase, clause or sentence is repeated in other words in the line or lines that follow once, twice or many times for emphasis; or again, there may be varied shades of thought moving on to a climax or, even again, the opposite thought may follow, thus to emphasize by contrast.

Form in Hebrew Poetry

Parallelism

In the interpretation of the Psalms and, in fact, all Hebrew poetry, it is very important that we watch carefully these parallelisms, otherwise we cannot get the full meaning. The Hebrew language has very few modifying adjectives and adverbs, and depends very largely on repetition for its emphasis, and if we do not regard these couplets we lose practically all the emphasis and, besides this, endanger ourselves of not getting the proper thought.

Value of Parallelism

Each Psalm is a unit of thought within itself, all the material of which clusters around a common subject. Each Psalm will therefore yield to a careful analysis in which we may discover a group or groups of sub-topics under the main subject.

Unit of Thought

The Psalms cover almost every phase of thought in the varied experiences of life. Some are didactic, teaching in song some important truth (Psalms 1, 4, 119 and many others); others are songs of praise for the mani-

Kinds of Psalms

festation of Jehovah in providence, history, nature or in God's Word (103, 117, 148, 106, 105, 19 and others). Some express deep penitence (32, 51); others are intercessional (20, 67, 132); others are songs expressing grief in times of severe persecution and sickness (4, 42, 43, 57); some carry a strong Messianic forecast (2, 16 and 22).

Spirit of Reverence

Throughout the entire Psalter, there is a deep spirit of reverence for Jehovah. No matter how great the persecution or grief, gleams of hope appear and strains of praise follow in close succession, and not infrequently there are tremendous outbursts of hallelujahs.

PSALMS ANALYZED

Psalm 1

Subject—The Blessed Man

1. How to become blessed:
   (1) The negative side—by avoiding evil; given in three synonymous lines; somewhat climactic (vs. 1).
   (2) The positive side—by keeping the law of Jehovah; given in two parallel lines (vs. 2).
2. What a blessed life is:
   (1) It is like a tree planted by the waters; given in one line (vs. 3A).
   (2) It is always fruitful; given in three parallel lines (vs. 3B).
3. The wicked do not have the stability and fruitfulness of the blessed man; given in four parallel lines (vs. 4, 5).
4. Conclusion—the righteous and wicked in strong contrast; given in two contrast or antithetic lines (vs. 6).

Psalm 19

Subject—The Value of Meditating upon Nature and the Bible

1. What the heavens teach of the glory of God; given in parallel lines (vs. 1-6).
2. What the law of Jehovah teaches; given in parallel lines (vs. 7-11).
3. The great need of living a careful life under such instructions (vs. 12-14).

(Note that verses 13, 14 are prayer.)

Psalm 32

Subject—The Blessedness of Being Forgiven

1. The subject stated in four parallel lines (vs. 1, 2).
2. The burden of an unpardoned life; given in four parallel lines (vs. 3, 4).
3. Pardon comes through confession (vs. 5).
   (1) Confession; given in three parallel lines (vs. 5A);
   (2) Pardon granted (vs. 5B).
4. The pardoned man's concern for others (vs. 6, 7).
5. The instruction the pardoned man will give to those who need pardon (vs. 8, 9, 10).
6. The Psalmist exhorting those who have been blessed by pardon to rejoice in Jehovah (vs. 11).

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. Name the three kinds of Hebrew literature.
2. What was the mission of the Psalms in Hebrew life?
3. Give the authorship of the Psalms.
4. What important form element enters into the composition of the Psalms?
5. What kind of thought do they express?
6. In what sense does each Psalm stand alone?
7. Analyze Psalms 24, 117 and 148.

Lesson IX

Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament

PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, SONG OF SOLOMON AND JOB

When Written

These four books contain what is generally known as the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. They are not the result of any single age in the history of Israel, even as the Psalms are not; and yet the first three of these books seem to have sprung largely from the period of Solomon's reign. In fact two of them, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, and part of the Proverbs are by their headings assigned to Solomon. It is, however, very uncertain in what age the book of Job belongs. Many have placed it in the patriarchal age, because the religious setting seems to be pre-Mosaic and patriarchal. The book appears to have come from Arabia and might have come out of the age of Moses, or even later, and not have been influenced by the Mosaic covenant.

Suggestive Readings

1. The wisdom of Solomon. 1 Kings 4: 29-34; 10: 1-10.
2. The true purpose of the Proverbs. Prov. 1: 1-19.
3. How to get wisdom. Prov. 2: 1-11.
4. An ideal woman. Prov. 31: 10-31.
5. The folly of trusting in temporal things. Eccles. 2: 1-17.
6. Fearing God and keeping his commandments the whole duty of man. Eccles. 12: 1-14.
7. Characterization of Job. Job 1: 1-5; 29: 1-25.
8. The consultation concerning Job. Job 1: 6-12; 2: 1-6.
9. Job under trial. Job 1: 13-22; 2: 7-10.

10. The visit of the three friends. Job 2: 11-13.
11. Job's bitter complaint. Job 7: 11-21.
12. Eliphaz severely rebuking Job. Job 22: 1-11.
13. Job comparing his three friends to his father's sheep dogs. Job 30: 1-15.
14. Elihu beginning his address. Job 32: 1-22.
15. Jehovah scaling the heights of sublimity. Job 38: 1-38.
16. Job's humble confession. Job 42: 1-6.

THE PROVERBS

This book contains a great many short, terse sayings on the various practical affairs of everyday life.

Introduction It begins in chapters 1-9 with a series of excellent discourses on wisdom. In these discourses a father strongly exhorts his son to get wisdom and prize it as the one thing above everything else in his life. It will keep him from the evils of life, and lead him into the largest usefulness.

These first nine chapters make a very good introduction to the main body of the book contained in chapters 10 to 22: 16. It is from this main

The Proverbs section that the book gets its name. It is composed of proverbs or maxims on almost every phase of life. There seems to be no attempt at any logical arrangement, and almost every verse is a unit within itself, expressing both the positive and negative sides of the same thought in what is called antithetic parallelisms. Justice and injustice, knowledge and ignorance, the wise and the foolish, riches and poverty, diligence and slothfulness, righteousness and unrighteousness, friendship and enmity, peace and contention, temperance and intemperance, are again and again, now from this angle and now from that, brought into sharp contrast to each other.

This part of the book is followed by several short

sections by different authors. They group themselves into the following sections: 22: 17 to 24: 22; 24: 23-34; 25: 1 to 29: 27; 30: 1-33; 31: 1-31.

The book is very practical and helpful, and many of these sayings are as fresh today as when they were written. It is not strange that most of them are assigned to Solomon, and that most of them apply more closely to business and social life rather than to things that are deeply spiritual. The historical note in 1 Kings 4: 29-34 plainly shows us the bent of Solomon's early life.

Value of the Book

ECCLESIASTES

This book is a record of experiences in the temporal affairs of life. These experiences failed to satisfy the longings of the soul. At the end of each one there is written vanity. The author gave a thorough trial to almost every phase of worldly life. Riches, social life, amusements, intellectual attainments, royal administration, were all weighed in the balances and found wanting.

Variety in Worldly Life

The closing chapter in the book strikes a higher chord, and finds true satisfaction only in the spiritual realm of life.

SONG OF SOLOMON (CANTICLES)

This musical little book comes to us in the form and spirit of an oriental romantic love song. The characters in the song are Solomon, a fair Shulamite damsel, and her associates. The Jewish Talmud holds that the book expresses an allegorical allusion to the love which Jehovah has for the Jewish church. Many Christian interpreters follow this mode of inter-

Nature of the Book

pretation, but enlarge it so that the love of Jehovah reaches the Christian church as well.

There is nothing either within the book itself or in the Bible elsewhere that gives a hint at such an allegorical significance. Conjugal relationship was held sacred enough in Hebrew life to justify such a book.

Some have taken exception to the book on the ground of its apparent immodest statements, but nothing is expressed in the book which is not in perfect keeping with the ideals of oriental modesty.

JOB

The book of Job has a great message for the world.

Circumstances of Writing

We do not know when or by whom it was written, but we may know the message it brings. The religion of the book is patriarchal. Its style is simple and sublime. Its form, excepting a brief introduction and conclusion of prose, is dramatic poetry. Its main outline is:

1. An introduction. Chapters 1, 2.
2. A series of discourses concerning Job's suffering. Chapters 3-41.
3. A brief conclusion. Chapter 42.

The Introduction.—Chapters 1, 2.

The First Picture

Here Job is first of all characterized as one of the model men of his age. The picture is one that is beyond reproach, and it is very necessary that we keep this in mind in the fuller study of the book.

The First Test

At the suggestion of Jehovah Satan, impugning the religious motives of Job, puts him to a series of severe tests (1: 13-19). Through these tests Job maintains his integrity and worships God.

The Second Test

Again, at the suggestion of Jehovah, Satan put Job to a severe test of bodily affliction (2: 7-10). Here also Job proved himself faithful (2: 10). But while he was still under the severity of this affliction three of his friends by common appointment came to console him (2: 11-13). These three friends instead of giving him words of comfort or other manifestations of kindness, sat down on the ground about him for seven days and nights. The belief of the three friends, and even of Job himself, was that afflictions were immediately due to sin and that the measure of one's afflictions is a fair index to the sins that have been committed. The severe affliction of Job, therefore, at once astounded these men. How could they approach such a sinner as Job? How could they find words that would in any way make matters better?

The Friends Speechless

A Series of Discourses Concerning Job's Suffering.—Chapters 3 to 41.

Job's Despair

Job well knew what kind of storm was brewing while the three friends sat speechless on the ground. He broke forth in a most pitiful complaint of despair (3: 1-26). This stirred his friends, and Eliphaz, apparently the oldest of the three, answers Job (chapters 4, 5). Job in turn answers him (chapters 6, 7).

First Cycle

Bildad follows with a speech (chapter 8), and is followed by Job (chapters 9, 10). Zophar now has a message (chapter 11), and he is followed by Job (chapters 12-14).

Second and Third Cycles

This cycle of speeches is followed by another cycle (chapters 15-21), and still by another, excepting that Zophar comes no more upon the scene (chapters 22-31).

Severe Charges

In these speeches the three friends stoutly maintain that Job's suffering is due to a life of sin. They even charge him with some of the grossest crimes. They plead with him to repent, that he may be restored, both in body and soul. They strongly defend the justice of God in dealing as he does with Job.

Job Confused

On the other hand, Job cannot understand his own case. He knows that their accusations are false. He knows that he is a good man, but he can not understand why he suffers so severely. He strongly denounces his three friends as his worst enemies, and he even brings severe charges against God for putting him into this calamity.

Elihu Speaks

Elihu, a young man, standing by and longing to enter the conflict, now begins to advise Job (chapters 32-37). He, however, fails to help the matter.

Jehovah Speaks

Jehovah then speaks to Job out of the whirlwind (chapters 38-41). In this great discourse Jehovah convinces Job that he is too insignificant to bring any charges against Jehovah. Job thoroughly repents for the things he said concerning Jehovah during these speeches (42: 1-6). This confession is not for anything he had done prior to his affliction, but only for the rash utterance of his despair.

Job Humble

The Conclusion.—42: 7-17.

Jehovah asks Job to mediate in behalf of his three friends who failed so utterly to maintain the cause of God in the charges they brought against Job (42: 7-9).

Job is also greatly blessed in the latter end of his life (42: 10-17).

The truth this story brings to the world is that suf-

fering is not always due immediately to sin, but that the very best of men may sometimes be called upon to suffer to bring blessings to the world. Thus, too, Jesus suffered as no man ever did, that the world might be redeemed. This testing brought a blessing even to Job himself (42: 5), as also did the sufferings of Jesus (Heb. 5: 8).

Teaching of the Book

It also incidentally teaches that men may be sincerely attempting to defend God and his cause and be like Job's friends—seriously wrong.

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. Out of what Old Testament period do the books of wisdom literature largely come?
2. Give the main divisions of the book of Proverbs.
3. What line of thought do the Proverbs reveal?
4. What is the thought of the book of Ecclesiastes?
5. What is the nature of the Song of Solomon?
6. Give the main divisions of the book of Job.
7. What attitude did Job's three friends take toward his suffering?
8. What made Job himself rash at times?
9. What was the effect of Jehovah's speech?

Lesson X

Old Testament

THE PROPHETIC LITERATURE

What It Is

The prophetic literature is the message of the Hebrew prophets. It comprises nearly one-third of all the material of the Old Testament. It is found mainly in the books bearing the names of the prophets, but there are in addition to this also many prophetic strains imbedded in the historical books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.

The Mission of the Prophet

The prophets were men called and inspired of God to mediate between him and his people in messages of instruction, comfort, promise, warning and judgment. They were strongly endowed with the Spirit of God (Micah 3: 8; Isa. 61: 1-3; 2 Peter 1: 21). They were men of conviction, willing to stand alone and even die for the truth.

General Outline

We divide the prophets into two groups that we may the better study their messages:

1. Early prophets from the Patriarchal Age to Elisha.
2. The later prophets from Jonah to Malachi.

Suggestive Readings

1. The mission of the prophet. Deut. 18: 15-22.
2. Isaiah's great commission. Isa. 6.
3. The urgency of heeding the prophetic call. Amos 7: 14, 15, and 3: 1-8.

4. Contrast between the true prophet and the false prophet. Jer. 14: 13-18; Micah 3: 1-8.

5. The great test of Elijah. 2 Kings 18: 25-40.

6. The great Messianic forecast. Isa. 11: 1-16; 61: 1-11.

7. Prophets suffering in service. 2 Chron. 24: 20-22; Jer. 37: 16-21; 38: 4-13.

8. A prophet's message spurned. Jer. 36: 20-26.

THE EARLY PROPHETS

Patriarchal Age

These are the prophets who have left us no books, but whose messages are found here and there in the historical books. There is a large number of them. Enoch is called a prophet (Gen. 5: 18-24 and Jude 14). Abraham is called a prophet for the intercession he made for Abimelech (Gen. 20: 7).

Aaron, the spokesman of Moses, and Miriam, his sister, are called prophets (Ex. 7: 1, 2 and 15: 20, 21).

Moses was designated as one of the greatest prophets (Deut. 34: 10-12), and because of this he became a standing type of the whole prophetic line, even down to Christ himself (Deut. 18: 15-19; Acts 3: 22, 23; 7: 37).

Samuel

It remains, however, with Samuel, the last one of the judges, to bring us fully into the age of prophetism (Acts 13: 20; 3: 24). From his very boyhood days he began receiving messages from Jehovah and delivering them to his people (1 Sam. 3: 1 to 4: 1). He had a great message for his people, as we see it in 1 Sam. 7: 3; and another for Saul (1 Sam. 13: 13-15; 15: 10-34). In addition to delivering these messages, he anointed Saul and David to become kings (1 Sam. 10: 1-8; 16: 1-13), and stood at the head of the band or school of prophets (1 Sam. 10: 5, 6; 19: 20).

Nathan and Gad

Nathan and Gad were faithful associates of his (1 Chron. 29: 29; 2 Sam. 7: 1-17; 12: 1-15; 12: 25; 1 Kings 1: 1-31).

We might also mention Ahijah (1 Kings 15: 29, 30; 14: 1-18) and Shemiah (1 Kings 12: 21-24; 14: 25-28); and the nameless prophet (1 Kings 13: 1-30).

Azariah stood back of Asa in his great reformation (2 Chron. 15: 1-7).

Hanani (1 Kings 15: 17-22; 2 Chron. 16: 1-6).

Elijah did a great work in the wicked reign of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings, chapters 17-21; 2 Kings, chapters 1-3).

Elisha followed Elijah (1 Kings 19: 19-21; 2 Kings 1-8).

Faithful Micaiah is worthy of mention (1 Kings 22: 7-9; 13-28; 29-40; 2 Chron. 18: 6-8; 12-27).

Many Prophets

Besides these there were many others, even hundreds of them, but all this is really only the beginning of true prophetism.

THE LATER PROPHETS

The Age of Prophets

It is in the service of the later prophets, whose names seldom appear in historical books, that we enter truly into the prophetic age. With each one of these we have a book containing his message and important events of his life. There are four distinct groups of them.

1. The prophets of Israel: Jonah, Amos and Hosea.
2. The prophets of Judah: Isaiah, Micah, Joel, Habbakkuk, Zephaniah, Nahum, Obadiah and Jeremiah.
3. The prophets of the Exile: Ezekiel and Daniel.
4. The prophets of the restoration: Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL

Jonah's Mission

Jonah lived at Gath-hepher, just north of Nazareth, in the days of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14: 25-27). The message of his life is recorded in the book bearing his name. It is a message for Nineveh, but it is more than likely that even this was meant for the welfare of Israel. The miraculous element of this story has become one of the targets of modern criticism and often the real value of the message is ignored.

Amos and Hosea

Amos and Hosea, who also lived in the reign of Jeroboam II., brought a strong warning to Israel. The people had not heeded the counsel of the faithful Elijah and Elisha and others, and were thoroughly steeped in the idolatry, sensuality and avarice of Baal worship. The book of Amos is a series of continual warnings against this wickedness, while the book of Hosea contains lamentation after lamentation and warning after warning, but all to no avail. The people go on from bad to worse, until they are finally carried away into Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17: 5, 6).

Hope for Israel

There are, however, in each of these books a few words of comfort for the faithful. In Amos 9: 11-15, Hosea 1: 10 to 2: 1, 2: 21-23, 3: 5 and 14: 4-9, there are rich promises of return to the faithful. These promises are so large that they are finding their fulfillment now in our own age of Christ's reign.

THE PROPHETS OF JUDAH

Isaiah and Micah

Before Amos and Hosea had closed their labors for Israel, in the north, Isaiah and Micah began to plead with Judah in Jerusalem and its environment. Both these men were great prophets. Isaiah did

his work in Jerusalem, while Micah did his mainly in the rural districts of Judah.

The wickedness of Judah is clearly illustrated in Isaiah's first picture (Isa. 1: 2-17) and in Micah's strong message (Micah 3: 5-12 and 7: 1-6). Appeal after appeal was made and for forty years Isaiah kept faithfully at his task. These appeals were interspersed with thunderbolts of judgment against this unfaithful, idolatrous people, and even against the wicked world nations (chapters 13-34). These judgments against Judah were interspersed with great promises for the faithful. These promises were the assurance to those who were faithful, of a return from Babylon, but often the prophet would soar away from his own age into the Messianic age of our own day, when the kingdom should reach large dimensions and glory (2: 1-4; 9: 1-7; 11: 1 to 12: 6, together with a large portion of the material of chapters 40-66).

Wickedness

Hope

Joel also brought a strong message to Judah in the picture of a tremendous locust scourge (Joel 1: 1 to 2: 11). He associates with this picture of judgment a beautiful promise of restoration (2: 18-27), and even with a glowing picture of the Messianic age (2: 28 to 3: 21).

Great Foregleams

We are not sure just when Joel lived, but probably somewhat earlier than Isaiah and Micah.

Habakkuk and Zephaniah were faithful prophets of Judah in close connection with the services of Isaiah and Micah.

Nahum also brought a message of comfort to Judah in the assurance that the great Assyrian world power, whose capital was at Nineveh, should speedily fall under the judgment of God. This it

Nineveh Condemned

did after a few years, when the combined powers of Media and Babylonia laid it low.

It remains with Jeremiah, one of the greatest of the prophets, to bring in the final appeal to Judah. For more than fifty years he worked faithfully for the salvation of these people. Warning after warning, lament after lament, was brought to them, even in the face of imprisonment and the severest persecution, even until after the people were carried by Nebuchadnezzar into Babylon.

Jeremiah

It is probably in close connection with the ministry of Jeremiah that Obadiah gave a severe rebuke against Edom for its unfaithfulness to Judah in time of need.

Obadiah

THE PROPHETS OF THE EXILE

The Babylonian exile was a severe schooling for Judah. Bereft of their temple and its holy utensils of worship, many turned away and lost themselves in worldly pursuits. Others losing hope sadly deplored their loss and wept in bitterness (Psa. 74 and 137).

Need of Reform

From among the early exiles God called a young man, Ezekiel, and laid upon him the large burden of caring for the spiritual welfare of his people (Ezek. 2 and 3). He brought to them message after message, in which he instructed them and strongly urged them to live up to what they had learned of the earlier prophets. In chapters 36-48 he paints, in the most glowing terms, the pictures of return and restoration and the marvelous triumph of Jehovah's kingdom. So bright are these pictures that John the Revelator draws from them material for the Paradise of the future. Much of this material is having a fulfillment in

Faithful Ezekiel

our own day. Certainly the light of these pictures did much to dispel the hopeless darkness of the Exile.

Daniel

Daniel, too, lived during this age and gave many definite promises of final triumph. He saw the kingdom of God moving out over all the kingdoms of the world (2: 34, 35; 44, 45). He even gave the promise of a resurrection to the just and the unjust.

But for the faithful exhortation, warning and promises of these two men, the people would likely have been lost in the exile, as much of Judah and most of Israel seem to have been.

THE PROPHETS OF THE RESTORATION

Much Work

When the remnant of Judah and Israel had returned to the land of promise there was much work to do and there were still many enemies to oppose this work. In the joy recorded in Psalm 126 they at once began to rebuild the temple, so that they might resume the worship of their fathers. This was strongly opposed by their Samaritan and Moabitic neighbors.

Strong Opposition

So bitter was this opposition that even the Persian monarch, who still had control of the people, was persuaded to forbid further procedure. Under these circumstances the people lost heart and began again to become absorbed in worldly life.

Haggai and Zechariah

Two men, Haggai and Zechariah, were called simultaneously into a strong protest against this carelessness. They assured the people that if they would fully trust in Jehovah no enemy could prevail against the rebuilding and the prosperity of the people.

Malachi is the last one of the prophets before the coming of John the Baptist, four hundred years later.

He came to the people with a strong exhortation to faithfulness and spirituality.

The Light of the World

One by one we have followed very briefly the messages of these great men and have seen, in their lives, the continual love and long-suffering of God. These men glow in the light of the revelation of God until they are lost in the glory of him who is the Light of the World.

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. What was the mission of the prophet?
2. What two general classes of prophets were there?
3. Give the four divisions of second group of prophets.
4. Name several important prophets of the first general group.
5. Name the two main prophets of Israel.
6. Name three great prophets of Judah.
7. Name two prophets of the exile.
8. Name two important prophets of the restoration period.
9. What can you say about the prophet's call?

Lesson XI

Old Testament

THE RELIGION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AGE

History of Religion

In the history of the Old Testament one thing stands out prominently above everything else: it is religion. The very history itself is the history of religion rather than an account of the secular affairs of life. Its annals, its poems, its journeys, its conquests, in fact everything in it tends to the unfolding of its religion.

We divide this study into two parts: (1) The religion of the patriarchal age. (2) The Mosaic covenant.

Suggestive Readings

1. Jehovah's covenant with Noah. Gen. 6: 18; 8: 20 to 9: 7.
2. The call of Abraham. Gen. 12: 1-7; 17: 1-8.
3. The spiritual fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise. Hosea 1: 10, 11; Rom. 4: 11-17.
4. Jehovah's covenant with Abraham. Gen. 15: 1-21.
5. Abraham's faithfulness. Gen. 22: 1-9; Heb. 11: 17-19.
6. Angel ministry to Lot and Sodom. Gen. 19: 1-29.
7. Preparing to receive the Mosaic law. Ex. 19: 1-25.
8. The purpose of the giving of the Mosaic law. Gal. 3: 6-29.
9. The decalogue. Ex. 20: 1-17; Deut. 5: 6-21.
10. The feast days of the Mosaic covenant. Lev. 23.
11. Jehovah's kindness spurned. Psa. 63: 7-19.

THE RELIGION OF THE PATRIARCHAL AGE

Simple Religion

Religion in the patriarchal age was exceedingly simple. The father of the family and the tribe was the priest, and was the only official of either church or state (Gen. 4: 3, 4; 8: 20; 12: 7, 8; 13: 18; 22: 9; 26: 25; 33: 20; 35: 1, 7).

The offerings were mainly animal offerings given in expression of gratitude and consecration. The altar on which the offerings were made was a simple structure of stone, affording a convenient place for the fire and the offering. Human sacrifice, so common among some of the Canaanitic nations, was forbidden (Gen. 22: 12).

Various Means of Revelation

God made his will known to men in various ways. Sometimes he appeared to them in visions and dreams (Acts 7: 2; Gen. 15: 1; 20: 3; 28: 12; 46: 2); sometimes he spake to them through angel ministry (Gen. 16: 7-11; 19: 1-15; 21: 7; 22: 11, 15; 24: 7, 40; 31: 11; 32: 1; 48: 16); and frequently he seems to have spoken to men through direct intuition, when it is merely said, "Jehovah spake unto me," or "God said unto me" (Gen. 4: 6, 9, 15; 6: 13; 7: 1; 9: 8; 35: 1, etc.). Men also came personally to God in prayer (Gen. 20: 7, 17; 24: 12-15; 32: 9-12).

Special Call

God made a special call in the selection of Abraham as the head of a family through which he planned to bless the whole world, and to this end he made a strong promise. This promise he renewed again and again, and even put it into the form of a covenant (Gen. 15: 1-21). The seal of this covenant was the rite of circumcision (Gen. 17: 9-14, 22-28). This covenant carried both a material and a spiritual significance and became the basis of both the later covenants of God, made with his people, and finds its large ful-

fillment in its Christian age (Rom. 4: 11-17; Gal. 3: 6-29).

THE MOSAIC COVENANT

The simple forms of religion of the patriarchal age are followed by a religion of most elaborate ceremonies, in which almost every phase of the religious and moral life is carefully specified.

Probably the first definite step in the unfolding of this religious system, while the people were still in Egypt, was the establishment of the passover as a continual memorial of the deliverance from the Egyptian bondage (Ex. 12: 1-14). This feast became one of the prime factors of later Hebrew worship and, in addition to this, it also carried a strong typical significance forward into our own day, in which Christ became the true Passover of deliverance from sin (1 Cor. 5: 7).

Passover Instituted

It is, however, at Mt. Sinai that the people received The Law from Jehovah through the mediation of Moses (Ex. 19: 1-14). It was first spoken audibly to the people (Deut. 4: 11-14), and afterwards engraved on two tables of stone (Ex. 31: 18; 34: 28).

At Sinai

These two tables of stone contained the nucleus of the entire code of Hebrew laws (Ex. 20: 1-17). The first four of the commandments formed the basis of an elaborate system of worship while, on the other hand, the last six formed a basis of the large code of moral or ethical statutes. Throughout the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy these are worked out and applied in utmost details.

Religion and Morals

A tabernacle was built and fully equipped with the sacred utensils and appliances for sacrificial service and

Tabernacle

other varied lines of worship. This was later supplanted by a temple permanently located at Jerusalem, built according to the same general plan of the tabernacle, but built in great magnificence and at large expense.

There were two compartments, the holy place and the holy of holies, and the entire building was surrounded by an adequate court for the general assembly of the people. Only the priest entered the holy place and the high priest alone entered the holy of holies, and that only once a year, at the day of atonement. In the court, at the entrance of the holy place, stood a large altar on which the offerings were made, and there stood also at the entrance a large laver for the cleansing of the priests before entering upon their sacred duties of the office. Within the holy place there was a table of showbread from which the priests ate. There was also near the entrance into the holy place a golden lamp or candelabrum of seven branches. There was also near the entrance of the holy of holies an altar on which the priest burned incense at stated times.

Sacred Utensils

The only article within the holy of holies was a sacred chest called the ark of the covenant, the lid of which was covered by the wings of two cherubim, and was called the mercy seat. It was at this mercy seat that Jehovah promised to meet the high priest who came here to atone for the sins of the people.

Ark of the Covenant

In the book of Hebrews we learn that the tabernacle, its utensils and services, are very largely typical of the more deeply spiritual religion of the Christian age. Through great sacrifice and intercession our Savior passed through the holy place into the holy of holies of heaven itself, once for all (Heb. 9: 1-28).

Typical Significance

Thus, too, Christians are called priests and a holy nation, abiding constantly in the service of God (1 Peter 2: 9).

Festal Occasions

There were three annual festal occasions at which his people were expected to worship (Lev. 23). There were also many and various kinds of offerings prefiguring the sacrifices of the Savior and his people.

The moral law was worked out into almost endless details touching the many intricate relationships of mankind.

How Observed

The observance of the Mosaic code varied in almost every generation. At times it was faithfully kept almost to its utmost details. Then, again, it was so mixed up with the idolatrous practices of the surrounding heathen nations that its very form was all but lost. At times there was an effort to enter deeply into its spiritual demands, and then, again, it was observed merely in a cold, formal sense.

Looking Forward

The prophets, full of the Spirit of God, in a large range of vision looked forward to when this broken and sadly-abused covenant should be supplanted by a New Covenant written not on the tables of stone, but written by the Spirit of God in the hearts of men—a New Covenant which, in fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, would prove a blessing to all the nations of the world (Isa. 42: 1-13; Jer. 21: 33, 34; 2 Cor. 3: 6-18).

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. What one thing seems to be the predominating purpose of the Old Testament records?
2. Give the main characteristics of the religion of the patriarchal age.

3. What important covenant comes out of that age?
4. How was the Mosaic law given?
5. What two important phases does the Mosaic code maintain?
6. What can you say as to the observance of the Sinaitic law?
7. What was the prophets' hope?

Lesson XII

A Review of the Old Testament Lessons

Scope of the Lessons

These lessons have given us a brief survey of the entire Old Testament, both historically, geographically and religiously.

Purpose of the Review

This review will give us a general viewpoint of the whole and will show, too, how the entire Old Testament is a unit within itself. In addition to this it ought to fix the main divisions and the main trend of the thought firmly in the student's mind.

Read carefully again the introduction to these lessons so that you will be able to get the most out of this review. Lessons II-VII cover, in a brief way, the history from the creation to the coming of Christ.

Note very carefully these six main divisions or epochs.

Note also the main logical divisions of each one of these periods:

The three in the Patriarchal Period.

The four of the Exodus Period.

Two in the Period of Conquest.

Two in the Rise of the Kingdom.

The two in the Decline and Fall of the Kingdom.

The four in the Foreign Supremacy.

Note this not only in a mere mechanical sense, but with a special view to their religious significance.

Then let us notice the three kinds of Hebrew literature:

First, the Psalms

What are they?

Out of what age do they come?

What is their religious value and use?

Second, the Wisdom Literature

What books record it?
Out of what age does it mainly come?
What is the nature of the material?
What kind of poetry is it?

Third, the Prophetic Literature

What is the nature of it?
By whom was it given?
Under what circumstances was it given?
Name the books of the prophets in their chronological order.
What great truths concerning the future do they contain?
Read again the lessons on the Religion of the Old Testament Age.
What place does religion hold in the history of the Old Testament?
Give the two main divisions of the religion of the Old Testament.
What is the great difference between these two forms of religion?
Give the main points of the patriarchal religion.
Give the two main phases of the Mosaic code of religion.
Give some of the main types and shadows looking for fulfillment in the New Testament age.

Lesson XIII

New Testament

LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS

The Saving Message

The New Testament is a unit within itself. It has grown up under the fostering care of the Old Testament, but it is not an appendix to it. It has a saving message of its own, and is truly called the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation.

Practical Issues

This study brings us into our own dispensation and, therefore, becomes exceedingly practical. Every lesson comes home to us with an appeal that calls for the most careful consideration.

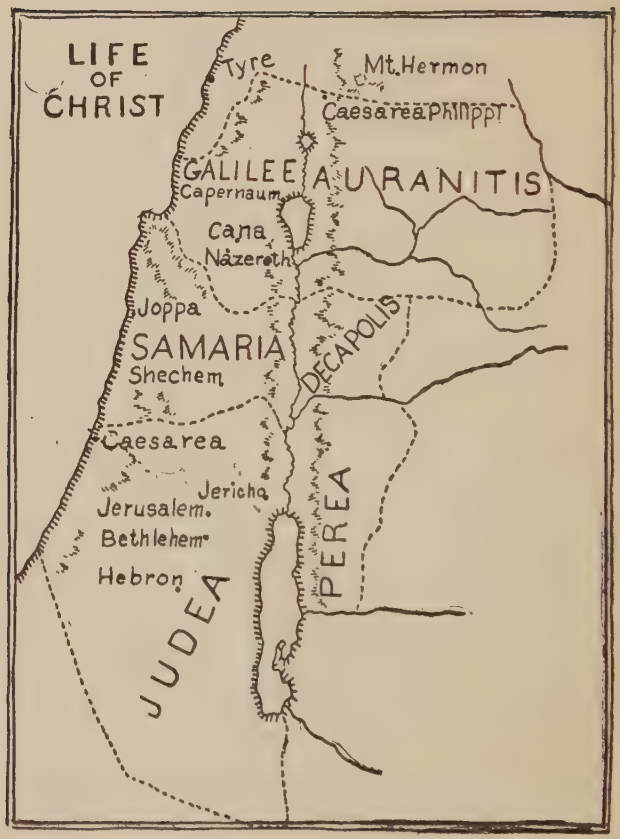
General Outline

It divides into three general sections:

1. The life and ministry of Jesus Christ. **Gospels.**
2. The development of the early church under the power of the Holy Spirit. **Acts and Epistles.**
3. The survey of the Christian dispensation. **Revelation.**

Suggestive Readings

1. The Prophet like Moses. Deut. 18: 15-22.
2. The certainty of the coming of Christ as King and Priest. Jer. 33: 19-26.
3. The prophet's promise of the new-born King. Isa. 9: 1-7; 11: 1-10.
4. Jesus born at Bethlehem. Micah 5: 2-9; Luke 2: 1-7.
5. Joy in heaven and on earth. Luke 2: 8-14; Heb. 1: 6; Rev. 5: 8-14.
6. The ministry of John the Baptist. Mal. 3: 1; 4: 4-6; Luke 3: 1-14.


LIFE
OF
CHRIST
Tyre
Mt. Hermon
Caesarea Philippi
GALILEE
ITURANITIS
Capernaum
Cana
Nazereth
Joppa
SAMARIA
Shechem
DECAPOLIS
Caesarea
Jericho
Jerusalem
Bethlehem
Hebron
JUDEA
PEREA

7. The ministry of Jesus in Judea. John 2: 13 to 3: 36.
8. The ministry of Jesus in Galilee. Matt. 4: 12-17; Luke 4: 16-19.
9. The ministry of Jesus in Perea. Luke 10: 1-24.
10. The passion week. John 12: 1-19.
11. The after-resurrection appearances. Acts 1: 1-11.

Three Great Sources

The four gospels unite to form a record of the life of Jesus. They are, however, not the only source of information concerning him. There are really three great sources from which we draw our information on this important subject.

Old Testament Predictions

1. There are many passages in the Old Testament pointing forward to the life of Jesus. Great men, such as Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Isaiah, and David — prophet, priest and king — were types of our Lord. Important Old Testament institutions bore their tribute in typological significance. The passover, the altar, the day of atonement, and various other offerings held the people anxiously waiting for the larger fulfillment, when the type might be lost in its archetype and when the shadow would give way to the real. Then, too, again and again, the prophets turned away from the sad spectacle of a broken covenant to the coming of the Savior who would make a new covenant, a covenant not written on tables of stone but written in the hearts of men by the Spirit of God (Jer. 31: 31-34; 2 Cor. 3: 2, 3, 16-18. Read also Isa. 9: 1-7; 11: 1-5; 42: 1-13; 61: 1-3).

2. In the Acts and Epistles of the New Testament there is also a large amount of material on the life and ministry of Christ. So varied and full is this part of the Scripture that some one has said that every phase

of the Christ-life could be reproduced out of these scattered fragments. Then, too, throughout all the ages, every loyal Christian in whose heart the Christ has been enthroned by the power of the Holy Spirit would bring a tribute of truth to the ministry of our Lord.

Historical Ground

3. It is, however, to the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, that we must look for a close historical outline of the life of Jesus.

Jesus himself left no written record of his work, but he promised that the apostles whom he had chosen should, through the power of the Holy Spirit, be his witnesses even to the ends of the world (Acts 1: 8). It was his mission to lay the foundation of saving truth and to make atonement for the world, but he left it to the faithfulness of his disciples under the administration of the Holy Spirit to evangelize the world.

The Mission of Christ

Two of the gospels, Matthew and John, bear the names of apostles, and evidently were written by the men whose names they bear. The other two, Mark and Luke, bear the names of close associates of the apostles. Luke plainly tells us that in his day many were writing gospels from the material they received from the eye-witnesses of the ministry of Jesus. He further states that he had made these matters a careful study and had decided to write a well-arranged discourse for the instruction of Theophilus (Luke 1: 1-4).

Circumstances of Writing

The four gospels all join in carefully unfolding the life of Christ, from the beginning of his ministry to the time of ascension. The material they used is not all the same, and the order of the events often

General Agreement

differs in details, but, in the main trend of the ministry, they harmonize beautifully.

Early Events

Matthew and Luke, in the first two chapters of their books, relate some very important events incident to the birth, infancy and development of Jesus.

Baptism and Anointing

Matthew, Mark and Luke all unite to give the ministry of John Baptist, and the baptism and temptation of Jesus (Matt. 3: 1 to 4: 11; Mark 1: 1-13; Luke 3: 1 to 4: 13).

Opening Ministry

John alone mentions the early Judean ministry of about eight or nine months' duration (John 1: 19 to 4: 42). The first three gospels go immediately from the temptation in the wilderness to the opening of the Galilean ministry, but John, apparently, having written much later than the others, supplements them with this very important phase of Christ's work.

The four gospels combine to give the watchword of the opening of the great Galilean ministry—the one great ministry of his life (Matt. 4: 12-17; Mark 1: 14, 15; Luke 4: 14, 15; John 4: 43-45).

Ministry in Galilee

This ministry, covering about one year and eight months, embraces the main bulk of the miracles and messages of Jesus. It takes up one-half of Matthew's gospel (4: 12 to 18: 35); more than two-thirds of Mark (1: 14 to 9: 50); and nearly one-third of Luke (4: 14 to 9: 50). John, however, scarcely mentions this ministry, since his book records mainly the ministry of our Lord in Jerusalem and its vicinity during the annual festal occasions. He does mention two important events in the Galilean ministry: The healing of the nobleman's son (4: 46-54) and the feeding of the five thousand and the sermon on the bread of life, given

the day following (6: 1-71). At least once during this ministry Jesus went to Jerusalem to a feast. While there he performed a miracle and gave a great discourse, proving that he was doing the work of the Father (John 5: 1-44).

Perean Ministry

The large Galilean ministry is followed by a ministry in Perea, east of the Jordan. This is hardly more than incidentally mentioned in Matthew and Mark (Matt. chap. 19, 20; Mark chap. 10). But Luke makes this one of the main issues of his book. He devotes about ten chapters to this ministry (Luke 9: 51 to 19: 27). This ministry covers a space of some five or six months just prior to the passion week. During this period he went up to Jerusalem several times and spent some time west of the Jordan in Ephraim (John 7: 14 to 8: 59; 9: 1; 10: 42; 11: 1-57).

Passion Week

The Perean ministry is immediately followed by what is generally known as the passion week, a week spent in the vicinity of Jerusalem just prior to the crucifixion. The discourses and events of this sacred week are, comparatively, very fully recorded by all four of these gospels. In fact, in no other phase of Christ's ministry do they so strongly unite to mention the items in such care and detail as they do here. Seven chapters of Matthew, five of Mark, four of Luke and eight of John are devoted to this week's work (Matt. 21-27; Mark 11-15; Luke 19: 28 to 23: 56; and John 12-19).

Strong Account

After the Resurrection

The four gospels also unite in giving the facts of the resurrection, the after-resurrection appearances and the great commission for the salvation of the world (Matt. 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20, 21).

A Mere Synopsis

Thus we see how the four gospels complement each other in giving a complete story of the life of our Master, and yet, with all this, we have but a synopsis of his work. John says that if all were written the world would hardly contain the books (John 21: 25).

Outline Review

We have thus seen that the gospels mark out, unmistakably in historical and geographical lines, several distinct ministries of Christ.

1. The birth, infancy, and development.
2. The period of preparation in the ministry of John Baptist.
3. The early Judean ministry.
4. The Galilean ministry.
5. The Perean ministry.
6. The passion week at Jerusalem.
7. The after-resurrection appearances.

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. With what special interest should we study the New Testament lessons?
2. Give the three main divisions of the New Testament studies.
3. Give a number of the main Old Testament types and shadows.
4. What three sources of information may we use in the study of the life and ministry of Christ?
5. Name the main divisions in the life of Christ as they appear in the four gospels.
6. Draw a map of Palestine, locating the countries of Judea, Galilee, Perea, and the cities of Jerusalem, Nazareth, Capernaum, Samaria, Jericho.

Lesson XIV

New Testament

THE FIRST THREE GOSPELS

Synopsis of Christ's Work

In the former lesson we followed the historical trend of the life of Christ through the four gospels. In this lesson and the one following we will look at these gospels separately.

The first three gospels give in the main a synopsis of Christ's work and are frequently called synoptics. John gives few events, but gives them with much greater fullness.

The General Pattern

The synoptics are all built over the same general historical and geographical pattern. Their common aim seems to be to set forth in a simple story the life and teachings of our Lord. Each writer of them, however, does this from his own peculiar viewpoint, but this difference is not nearly so marked as many suppose.

MATTHEW

Son of David and Abraham

The genealogical table, in the very beginning of the book, makes Jesus Christ the Son of both David and Abraham and, therefore, heir to the throne of David and the promise of Abraham.

The angel of the Lord gives Joseph full assurance of Christ's miraculous conception and of his large, world-saving ministry (1: 18-25).

The Tribute of the Magi

The Magi bring in from the heathen lands a rich tribute of welcome, while all Jerusalem is troubled and its tyrannical king falls into a fit of jealous rage (2: 1-22).

John's Ministry

John Baptist, in fulfillment of prophecy, brings the whole land under moral constraint to be ready for the coming of him who shall establish the kingdom. He warns in severest terms the two leading Jewish sects against depending upon their Abrahamic lineage for salvation (3: 7-10).

The Baptism of Jesus

Jesus himself yields humbly to the baptismal rite and receives from the Father the divine approval and the Messianic anointing of the Holy Spirit (3: 13-17).

True to the Father's Plan

This sacred event was immediately followed by a severe testing time. It was Christ's plan, as this book plainly indicates, to establish the kingdom of God in accordance with the prediction of Daniel and other prophets (Dan. 2: 44, 45; 7: 13, 14). But Satan here, at the very beginning, made a tremendous effort to persuade him to set up a temporal, worldly kingdom, according to the current Jewish ideals. Jesus, however, faithfully clinging to the Father's plan, thwarted every one of the tempter's plans and began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," the same spiritual message that John Baptist had been preaching (4: 1-17).

Principles of the Kingdom

A short season of this kind of service brought him a large following from all over the country (4: 25). To the disciples who had accepted his saving message and the multitudes who followed him he gave the great discourse on a number of fundamental principles of his kingdom (chapters 5-7).

This discourse was followed by a group of miracles

Disciples Commissioned

(chapters 8, 9), and these by a strong discourse to the disciples. He gave them power and sent them out into his service and strongly warned them of the dangers they would meet and exhorted them to faithfulness (10: 1-42).

The Development of the Kingdom

This is followed by a group of shorter discourses and miracles in which he is strongly opposed by the Jewish leaders (chapters 11, 12), and these are then followed by a beautiful sermon on the development of the kingdom (13: 1-52).

The Glory of the Kingdom

The group of short discourses in chapters 14-17 leads into the very climax of his great Galilean ministry. Here he began to reveal to his disciples the deeper spiritual import of his ministry and of his kingdom. He drew them out to where he could tell them of his death (16: 13-28), and of the glory of his kingdom (17: 1-7).

How to Live

Chapter eighteen records a strong discourse on some of the fundamental principles of government in the kingdom or the church. Chapters 19, 20 contain several important short discourses leading up to the triumphal entry (21: 1-11), which opens into the sacred ministry of the passion week.

Parables of Sifting

A series of parables (21: 28 to 22: 14), followed by several severe criticisms (22: 15-46), opens the way for a very strong arraignment of the Pharisaic leaders for their hypocritical mockery (23: 1-39).

Last Things

And now he turns to his disciples and gives them a very definite discourse on his second coming, the end of the world and the final judgment (chapters 24, 25).

This discourse is followed by an account of the betrayal, trial and death of Jesus (26, 27); and this by the glad news of his resurrection and the great commission of Christianizing the world, which he gave to his disciples before he left them (28).

Trial and Death

Thus we see that the record of Matthew reaches from his birth to his ascension, and that there are here a number of strong discourses on different phases of the kingdom of heaven, interspersed by many miracles and short discourses, all together gradually unfolding the plan of salvation brought by Jesus to the Jewish race and to the whole world.

Resurrection and Great Commission

MARK

Mark covers the same general ground that Matthew does, excepting that he omits the mention of the birth and early life of Jesus and begins at once with the ministry of John Baptist.

He gives very little which is not recorded in Matthew, and gives none of the long discourses of Matthew, but he does give fragments of a number of these, intermingled with many brief lessons and miracles. The book contains but little more than half as much as Matthew, but his statements are terse and his pictures are exceedingly graphic and lifelike.

Characteristics of Mark

The paragraphs are seldom closely connected, but are so related to each other as to show how busy the life of Christ was during his ministry.

LUKE

Luke covers the same general ground covered by Matthew and Mark and adds to this a vivid account of the Perean ministry.

How, Why and to Whom

In a very brief introduction he plainly gives the circumstances under which he wrote and the purpose of his writing (1: 1-4). He made a special effort to instruct his Greek friend, Theophilus, more fully and accurately concerning the life and ministry of Jesus.

Gabriel's Message

His first two chapters give the angel Gabriel's announcement of the coming of both Jesus and John Baptist (1: 5-38), the birth of both (1: 57 to 2: 20) and the development of both (1: 80; 2: 40-52).

The account of the ministry of John Baptist and the baptism and temptation of Jesus are nearly the same as Matthew's, excepting that he adds a genealogical table tracing the sonship lineage of Jesus through Adam back to God (3: 23-38).

Declaring His Messiahship

He opens the Galilean ministry with the statement that Jesus preached a powerful sermon at Nazareth in which he plainly declared his Messiahship and was ruthlessly rejected by the people among whom he had lived all his lifetime (4: 16-20).

The remainder of the Galilean ministry is much the same as that in Matthew and Mark, excepting that he omits nearly all the material found in Matthew 14, 15 and Mark 7, 8. Like Mark, he gives merely the fragments of the discourses found in Matthew.

Perean Ministry

Chapters 10-18, however, are unique, giving Jesus' ministry in the Perean Decapolis country. Here he gathers together seventy of his disciples and sends them out before him by twos (10: 1-24). This event is followed by a number of brief discourses, parables, and miracles, leading gradually up to the work of the passion week. The record of the passion week (19-23) is much the same as that in Matthew and

Mark, excepting that he gives but a portion of the long discourse of Matthew 24, 25.

Ascension from Olivet

In his treatise of the resurrection and appearances (chapter 24) he mentions one event in considerable detail (vs. 13-35), and then gives to the eleven a brief statement of the import of his entire ministry and, leading them out to Bethany, blessing them, he ascends to glory.

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. What is the main characteristic of the three gospels?
2. Give one of the important characteristics of Matthew.
3. How does Mark differ from Matthew?
4. How does Luke differ from Matthew?
5. How does Luke differ from both Matthew and Mark?
6. Give in your own words the main story of Matthew.
7. Give in your own words the main story of Luke.

Lesson XV

New Testament

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Suggestive Readings

1. The divine preëxistence of Jesus. 1: 1-3; 17: 5; Col. 1: 15-17.
2. Jesus rejected by his own people. 1: 4-11; 8: 48-59; 19: 6-12.
3. The abundant life for those who accept him. 1: 12-18; 15: 1-17.
4. The cold, worldly formalism of the Jewish life condemned. 2: 13-22.
5. The regenerating power of the Gospel. 3: 1-21.
6. Doing the Father's work. 5: 17-47.
7. Jesus' great prayer. 17: 1-26.

The writer of this book is almost universally accepted to be John the Apostle, known as the beloved disciple. The book is so different from other gospels that we are justified in studying it by itself.

Circumstances of Writing

Probably written much later than the others, it supplies much material omitted by them. Nearly the entire book is made up of material taken from Christ's ministry in and about Jerusalem, where he came most closely in contact with the Jewish leaders and where, therefore, he met his severest criticism and most real opposition. It was here that he could have done his most effectual work had it not been for the cold formalism and the self-righteous bias of the Jewish people.

Introduction

The book is profoundly spiritual and opens up the very heart of that for which Christianity stands.

The first eighteen verses of chapter one are a very beautiful introduction to the entire book:

1. The preëxistence and divinity of Jesus. 1: 1-3.
2. The Jewish people rejecting him who is the Light of life. 1: 4-11.
3. The grace and glory which come to those who accept him. 1: 12-18.

Chapters 1: 19 to 4: 54 contain a series of events in which Jesus, in his earliest ministry, does his first miracles and teachings and has his first following in Judea, Samaria and Galilee. Those who at this time come to him in appreciation of his work are some of the common fishermen out of the ranks of John's disciples (1: 35-51); some of the Pharisaic rulers (3: 1-21); some of the Samaritans, who were so little respected by the Jews (4: 1-42); and some of the Roman servants (4: 43-54).

Early Ministry

These few chapters are highly prophetic of the unselfishness and the scope of his ministry, and the cleansing of the temple (2: 13-22) discloses the spiritual import of the ministry, in strong contrast to the cold formality and worldliness of his people.

Chapters 5-12 are a series of strong discourses on very important phases of the mission of Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah and Savior of the world. In all of these discourses he is severely criticised and opposed by those who should have been the first to accept his message of mercy.

The Discourses

The first discourse in chapter five grows out of the criticism the Jews brought against him for healing on the Sabbath. When he told them that he was working with his Father they charged him with making himself equal with God. Upon this he renders a strong discourse on the fact that he is his Father's Ambassador here on earth, and that he is wholly dependent upon what he sees the Father do and hears the Father say. He grave-

Father and I

ly charges them with unbelief and false motives (42-47).

The second message was given in Galilee in close connection with feeding the five thousand. It was a discourse on Christ the Bread of Life.

Bread of Life

Many of the disciples and others at that time turned away from him because his teaching was too spiritual for their carnal desires (6: 60-69).

The third discourse is really a group of messages Jesus gave in the temple of Jerusalem during the feast of tabernacles. He was very strongly opposed and yet many believed upon him and were convinced of his divine mission. Those who opposed him did their utmost to stone him (8: 59).

Great Opposition

Chapters nine and ten seem to be a continued discourse growing immediately out of a miracle performed upon a blind man. He first taught them that he was the Light of the world and then that he is the good Shepherd of the flock, which is composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

Light of World

Chapter eleven gives the raising of Lazarus, accompanied by some strong teaching on Christ, the resurrection unto eternal life. Many believed on him, but others made continued effort to kill him.

Resurrection of Life

In chapter twelve, after enjoying a feast in the home of his near friends at Bethany, he went to Jerusalem on his triumphal entry and there gave a discourse indicating that he must die that the world might have life.

Royal Entry

After this Jesus took his apostles, who had been faithful to him through so many severe trials, into a

private upper room and there gave them a heart-to-heart talk on matters of momentous import.

Chapters 13-17 are in themselves a very important unit of this book. The great concern of Jesus at this time was "What will the disciples do when I am gone and they are left to themselves?" First of all, he ate with them that fraternal supper which was afterwards called the agape or love feast (13: 1-20). During this supper there was a contention among the disciples as to who should be the greatest (Luke 22: 24-30). Jesus took this as an opportunity of teaching them how properly to relate themselves to one another, so as to manifest the true Christian spirit of humility and service. He, as their Lord and Master, humbly stooped down and washed their feet and asked them to follow his example, that they might be cleansed of the last vestige of that spirit of pride and emulation which was continually bothering them and unfitting them for the truest service.

Humble Service

At this time, before he entered fully into his discourse, he dispatched the false Judas, who was sure to mar the occasion (13: 21-30).

From 13: 21 to 14: 21 there is a discourse in which Jesus strongly teaches the spiritual import of his ministry, so that when he is gone his disciples will be able to depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit as they had been depending upon him.

Farewell Address

From 15: 1 to 16: 33 there is another discourse, in which he goes still deeper into the same general truth of the former discourse, but plainly points to the great conflict of their future labors and the power by which their efforts will be a great success.

The closing of this sacred occasion is the prayer recorded in chapter 17. In this great prayer Jesus tenderly commits himself, his ministry, and all his follow-

ers of all ages into the hands of the loving Father. He prays that the unity and loyalty of his disciples may be so great and so constant as to convince the world of the truth of his loving mission.

Sad Picture

In chapters 18, 19 there is the sad picture of the betrayal, trial, and crucifixion. The story is really the sequel of every discourse in chapters 5-12. But this is not all. The true victory lies in chapters 20, 21, where the resurrection news is sent out and the disciples are brought to themselves again, and encouraged and sent out in the service of their Master.

The Message

The message of this book is not so much the record of events of the life of Jesus as it is a witness to the Sonship and true mission of his life amongst his own people (20: 30, 31). The constant yearning of his soul is expressed in 7: 17, where he says, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself."

Questions and Suggestions for Study.

1. Give the main difference between John and the other gospels.
2. Give the main divisions of the book.
3. What great contrast appears throughout the book?
4. What was the common result of all the discourses in chapters 5-12?
5. What is the main argument of the discourses in chapters 13-16?
6. What great burden lay on Christ's mind, as seen in the record of this book?

Lesson XVI

New Testament

THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

Of all the lives of all the men and women of all the earth, there is none comparable to the life of our Lord. Of all the teachers of all the earth, there is none who taught as he did. None lived and taught so as to spring a sense of awe upon all men of all the ages of the world and of all the ranks and professions of life, as did the meek and lowly Master.

Above All Others

He was perfectly pure and innocent and yet equally strong. He was lowly and yet great. He was the Son of man and yet the Son of God.

True Character

Out of the very fullness of his life he taught, and this teaching was the perfect revelation of God to the world. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1: 18).

True Revealer

We will study his life and then his teachings.

Suggestive Readings

1. The divine conception of Jesus. Luke 1: 26-38.
2. The divine preëxistence. John 1: 1-3; 17: 5; Col. 1: 15-17.
3. Jesus looking to the Father for guidance. John 5: 19-47.
4. Jesus bringing new life to humanity. John 3: 1-21.
5. Jesus' great concern for his people. John 10: 1-18.

6. The great appeal for the spread of the Gospel. Matt. 28: 16-20; Mark 16: 14-20; John 17: 18.

7. The prayer for the unity and consecration that glorify God. John 17: 1-26.

THE LIFE OF OUR LORD

Divinity of Christ

The divine preëxistence of Jesus is very clearly set forth by John when he says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made" (John 1: 1, 3; cf. the statement of Jesus, John 17: 5, and that of Paul, Col. 1: 16, 17).

His miraculous conception was just as strongly declared by the angel Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1: 31-35), and by the angel of the Lord to Joseph (Matt. 1: 20, 22).

The Message of the Angels

The birth of Jesus was attended by the mighty hosts of heaven. The angels' song seems to reverberate throughout the universe (Luke 2: 13, 14), and it seems to have been an event of momentous import when God called all the angels of heaven to worship the humble Babe of Bethlehem (Heb. 1: 6).

Symmetrical Development

The development of the early life was beautifully symmetrical in body, mind and soul (Luke 2: 40), and even at the age of twelve, he was already longing to enter actively into the Father's service and yet, in tender submission, he humbly yielded to dwell in the obscurity of private life, there to grow symmetrically into the fullness of manhood, and thus to enter the life of service at the Father's own time (Luke 2: 51, 52).

At the appropriate time, though himself sinless, he

entered, with confessing sinners, into the humble rite of baptism, and thus consecrated his life to the fulfillment of all righteousness in the large service of salvation (Matt. 3: 13-15), and there he received the Father's approval and the fullness of the Holy Spirit's indwelling (Matt. 3: 16, 17; John 3: 34-36). Thus he became the Messiah of the expectant ages of the past (Daniel 9: 25, 26), and the anointed Prophet, Priest and King for all ages of this world.

Approved and Endowed

In the power of the Holy Spirit he faithfully clung to the Father's plan of salvation and foiled the strongest efforts Satan could bring to turn him aside (Matt. 4: 1-11; Luke 4: 1-13; Mark 1: 11, 12). It was his meat and drink to do the Father's will, and on this food he lived day by day (John 4: 34).

Severely Tempted

His devotion to the Father was so complete that, under the trial of great problems and temptations and in times of great joy, he spent his time in prayer, while others slept, and sometimes he prayed all night (Luke 5: 16; 6: 12; 9: 29). He kept his eyes so constantly on the Father's bidding that it was morally impossible for him to do anything or speak anything excepting at the Father's initiative (John 5: 17-30).

Devotion to the Father

It was under the power of such consecration to the Father that he could truly lay his life upon the altar of service for the salvation of the world. His body, mind and soul were under constant control of the Divine Spirit of service. Every miracle he worked, every lesson he taught—in fact, every event of his busy life, was strongly pressed into service for the uplift and salvation of humanity, and for those who, in obstinacy, would not be helped, he wept bitter tears of lament (Matt. 23: 37-39).

Sacrifice in Service

Ransom of Calvary

For all the world, of all the ages, he submissively laid down his life in sacrifice on Calvary that, by his shed blood, all might receive ransom for their lost souls (Matt. 20: 28; 1 Tim. 2: 5, 6; Gal. 1: 4).

The Constant Appeal

His whole career was a life of unfathomable mystery. As the Son of man, he was truly human, entering sympathetically into the varied experiences of human life. As the Son of God, he was just as truly Divine, entering into the fullest saving power of God and thus, through the power of the indwelling Spirit, he was able to maintain the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2: 9). Notwithstanding the depth and fullness of his life, it was still so simple and truly human as to make the strongest possible appeal to all who are open to guidance and salvation. And when he saw the common people follow in his footsteps, his soul was moved with joy and thanksgiving (Luke 10: 21-24).

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

He Lived and Taught

The life which, in every instance, brought to mankind through its example such an appeal, spake also spontaneously out of its fullness in words that win the strong of every age (John 7: 46; Matt. 7: 28, 29).

Fatherhood of God

He plainly taught the loving Fatherhood of God in strong contrast to the current Jewish indefinite, distorted idea of God. First of all, he had himself been with the Father in glory before the world was created (John 17: 5), and was sent through the Father's love to bring salvation to the world (John 3: 16, 17). Thus he became the only adequate Revealer of the Father and the sole Medium of salvation (Matt. 11: 27; John 6: 46, 47).

Spirituality

The Father is Spirit, and alone through the spiritual concept can he be recognized, even in the ministry of Christ, his Son (John 4: 23, 24; 14: 6-11).

Personal Responsibility

The light of this revelation which he brought from the Father has made man responsible, so that now men have no excuse for sin (John 15: 22-24). All are asked to believe in the pardoning power of the Son, that they may have eternal life (John 3: 15, 16; 6: 47). This faith is to be more than a cold, formal assent to the truth, but it is to be a thorough, self-commitment—a full surrender to the Father's service. (Contrast John 2: 23, 24 with 14: 11-15.)

Regeneration

He taught that conviction would come to the world through the power of the Holy Spirit (John 16: 8-11), and that people should repent and be baptized, and thus enter the kingdom of God (Matt. 4: 17; Mark 1: 14, 15; John 3: 22). Even the Pharisees, who turned down the ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 7: 29, 30), were not exempt, for he told Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3: 3, 5).

The Atonement

This new life of regeneration and sonship would be possible only because he himself was willing to lay down his life in sacrifice, a ransom for sinful humanity (John 3: 15; 12: 23, 24; Matt. 20: 28; 26: 28).

Salvation Through Surrender

While thus Christ would lay down his life for mankind, he made it obligatory upon all who would be saved to surrender all and lay down their lives in the service of the salvation of the world (Matt. 10: 34-39; cf. Philpp. 1: 29, 30).

He laid upon his followers the responsibility of evangelizing the world (Matt. 28: 19, 20; Mark 16: 15, 16).

Preaching the Gospel

He taught, however, that this was not possible, excepting through the endowment and administration of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24: 47-49; Acts 1: 8). Even then many would not accept the Gospel's saving message and would fall under the severe condemnation of the justice of God (Matt. 7: 22, 23; 25: 41-46).

Spreading the Gospel

The transforming power of the Gospel, like leaven, would permeate the whole world until, in the final day of the consummation of the kingdom, he would come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels to render to all, both to those who are dead and to those who are alive, according to the response they had given him through his disciples (Matt. 13: 23; 47-50; 24: 39-44; 25: 31-46).

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. Give several evidences of Christ's divinity.
2. What was Jesus' constant attitude to the Father?
3. What did he do for humanity?
4. What value did he place on regeneration?
5. What great responsibility did he lay upon his followers?
6. What strong warnings did he give those who fail to accept his message?
7. What great promise did he make for the future?

Lesson XVII

New Testament

THE ACTS

Suggestive Readings

1. The last message of Jesus to the disciples. Luke 24: 44-53; Acts 1: 1-11.

2. The promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Joel 2: 28-32; Ezek. 36: 26-31; Matt. 3: 11; Luke 24: 49; Acts 1: 5, 8.

3. Awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1: 12-26.

4. The coming of the Holy Spirit and great ingatherings. 2: 1-4, 37-42; 4: 4.

5. Working miracles under the power of the Holy Spirit. 5: 12-16; 9: 32-43.

6. The unselfish life of the early Christians. 2: 42-47; 4: 32-37; 5: 41, 42; 20: 31.

7. Paul's farewell exhortation to the elders at Ephesus. 20: 17-38.

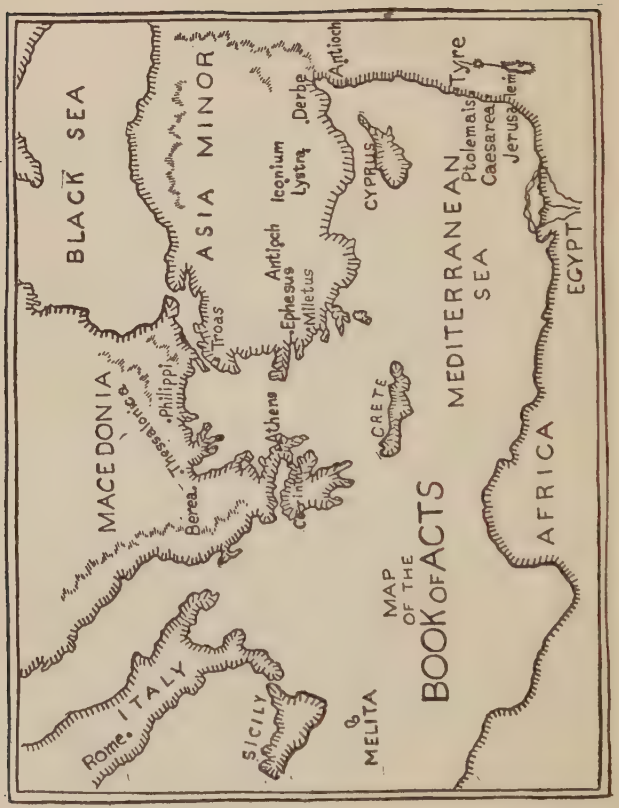
8. Some of the trials of Paul's early missionary work. 2 Cor. 11: 16-33.

What It Is

The Acts is a historical record of Christian life in the early church, just as the Gospels are the record of the life of Christ. The book is really a continued account of the gospel story of Luke. The first chapter of Acts reaches back over the last chapter of Luke far enough to make an easy transition from one to the other.

Acts and the Gospels

The first eleven verses of chapter 1 are a vital part of the ministry of Christ. Verses 12-26 are introductory to the coming of the Holy Spirit, which is the all-important event of this book, just as the coming of Christ was the all-important event of the Gospels.


BLACK SEA
MACEDONIA
ASIA MINOR
Thessalonica
Philippi
Berea
Troas
Antioch
Derbe
Iconium
Lystra
Antioch
Ephesus
Miletus
Athens
CYPRUS
CRETE
Tyre
Ptolemais
Caesarea
Jerusalem
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
EGYPT
AFRICA
Rome
ITALY
SICILY
MELITA
MAP OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

On this event depends every important issue of the book. The promise had been repeated many times from the days of the prophets down to the very day of Christ's ascension (Joel 2: 28-32; Isa. 32: 15; Jer. 31: 33; Ezek. 36: 26, 27; 37: 14; Matt. 3: 11; John 1: 33, 34; Luke 24: 49; Acts 1: 5, 8). Now, at last, while the disciples were gathered together in earnest prayer (1: 14; 2: 1), the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them.

Coming of the Holy Spirit

This event marks the beginning of the work of the great commission given by Christ during the forty days of his after-resurrection life (Matt. 28: 16-20; Mark 16: 15-20; Luke 24: 47, 48). The disciples now began to preach the Gospel under the power of the Holy Spirit, for they had been told to remain at Jerusalem until they were endowed with this power (1: 4; Luke 24: 49).

The Great Commission at Work

This book traces the course of the gospel ministry for awhile. It is not by any means a complete history of the work of the apostles and early disciples. It tells, however, how this work began at Jerusalem (chapters 1-7); and how, through persecution, the disciples being scattered, preached the Gospel throughout the country of Palestine (chapters 8-12); and finally, how Paul, the great missionary to the Gentiles, carried the good news to Asia Minor, Eastern Europe and even to Rome (chapters 13-28).

General Outline

Chapters 2-4 mention four important discourses. The first one, prompted by the infilling of the Holy Spirit, brought on severe criticism (2: 4-13). The second one is a very strong defence by Peter and ends in a large ingathering (2: 14-42). The third (3: 11-26) grew out of a miracle and resulted in a large

Four Great Discourses

ingathering (4: 4), and in a persecution and imprisonment by the Sadducees (4: 1-3). The fourth discourse of this group is a defense against this persecution. They had been promised strength for these occasions (Matt. 10: 19, 20), so Peter was now given a special endowment (4: 8), and was thus enabled thoroughly to vindicate the cause of right.

The Persecutions

This persecution is the first one of a large series of persecutions of the Christian church, both as mentioned in the Acts and in the pages of church history. The Master had carefully forewarned the disciples of this in his closing discourse (John 15: 18; 16: 11). These persecutions, first by the Sadducees, then by the Pharisees, and later on by the pagan world, and still later on by the dreadful inquisition of the church itself, did not seriously retard the onward march of Christianity, but instead, it seemed to inspire the faithful Christians with new zeal, and thus caused a larger spread of the Gospel.

Praising God in Persecution

In the midst of this strong Sadducean persecution, the disciples met to praise God for his sustaining grace, and plead for added strength. The promise came with no uncertain evidence and they were emboldened to speak the Word with power (4: 23-31). Their defences were not merely defences of their own interests, but they were powerful sermons in defence of the Gospel. Each arrest, therefore, brought a new opportunity of preaching the Gospel.

Miracles

Their preaching was accompanied by strong miracles in evidence of the Divine source of their work (2: 43; 3: 1-11; 4: 16; 5: 12-16).

Not alone in preaching the Gospel and doing miracles was the power of Christianity manifest, but also

Christian Character

in the complete unselfishness and devotion of Christian character (2: 44-47; 4: 32-35). Barnabas, who later on is one of the leading missionaries, was given as an example of those who consecrated all to the service of their Master (4: 36, 37). Some, however, hypocritically made a pretence to do this and suffered severely (5: 1-11).

Difficulties Not a Hindrance

The minor contention in the circle of the Christians (6: 1) was easily settled and, apparently through it, strong men were discovered for the ministry of the Gospel. So little, too, did the Sadducean persecution hinder the work that many priests joined in with the Christian band (6: 7).

First Christian Martyr

The ministry, arrest, defence, and martyrdom of Stephen are a prominent feature of the book of Acts (6:8 to 7: 60). This is the first one of many thousands of Christians who, like the Savior, died the death of martyrdom for the sake of the cause. In his defence he reached the great spiritual climax (7: 48-50), which Jesus had proclaimed (John 4: 21-23). The Pharisees had lost themselves in their cer-

Spirituality and Not Formalism

emonialism, and whenever Christ or his disciples struck a high spiritual note they became enraged. So lost were they in the service of ceremonialism that the temple had become an object of worship rather than the means to the glory of God. Even Solomon, in his dedicatory prayer, had looked beyond the temple and its service to God (1 Kings 8: 27). Isaiah, also, considered the temple merely as a temporary expedient (Isa. 66: 1). So now, when Stephen struck this high note of spirituality, he was taken by an angry mob of formalists and stoned (7: 54-60).

The martyrdom of Stephen opened up into a severe Pharisaic persecution, the leader of which was Saul of Tarsus, and this brings us into the second large division of the book, chapters 8-12. This section reveals, on the one hand, how the Christians, driven away from Jerusalem by this persecution, went everywhere preaching the Gospel (8: 4), and on the other hand, how gradually the way was opened for preaching the Word to the Gentile world, as it appears in the next section, chapters 13-21. It is well to notice how these two lives are woven in together. Philip begins his work in Samaria, a semi-Gentile country (8: 5-13). Peter and John, too, are sent to this same people (8: 14-25). While Peter is working among the Jewish people in the district of Lydda and Joppa, he is called to open the door to the Gentiles at Cæsarea (10: 1-48).

Christians Scattered

Already, before this time, Saul was miraculously convicted of his false way and commissioned to be the apostle to the Gentiles (9: 1-9; 22: 1-21; 26: 2-23). As Peter thus opened the door to the Gentiles, so also the church at Antioch, which afterwards was so prominent in mission work, opened the door to this people, simultaneously with Peter's work (11: 19, 20).

Saul Converted

Gentiles Admitted

The event in the 12th chapter, the martyrdom of James the apostle, reveals how little the powers of this world were able to hinder the work of the Lord in the early church (12: 20-24).

James Killed

The Gentile church at Antioch early felt the true impulse of the missionary spirit. When its workers were gathered together in spiritual service, the Holy Spirit moved them to send out two of their strongest men into the great mission field (13: 1-3).

Strong Missionary Impulse

The two men, Barnabas and Paul, visited Cyprus and central Asia Minor, and established what were afterwards probably known as the Galatian churches (13: 4 to 14: 28).

The Council at Jerusalem

This mission, together with the work among the Gentiles at Antioch, stirred up bitter criticism among some of the Jewish Christians because the Gentiles were permitted to become Christians without first becoming Jewish proselytes. The church at once called a council at Jerusalem to settle these difficulties (15: 1-35).

Second Missionary Tour

Paul made a second missionary journey to build up the churches he and Barnabas had established in their first journey (15: 36 to 18: 21). At this time he took with him Silas and Timothy as his coworkers. They crossed over into Europe and established churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth and probably Athens. While at Corinth he wrote the two letters to the church at Thessalonica, which were without doubt the first New Testament books to have been written.

Third Missionary Tour

Paul also made a third missionary journey and visited the churches of Asia Minor and Eastern Europe. On this journey he spent most of his time and effort at Ephesus (18: 23 to 21: 14). Here he wrote a letter to the church at Corinth, known as First Corinthians. From here he went by Troas to Macedonia (20: 1, 2), where he wrote Second Corinthians. From Macedonia he went to Corinth where, on his former journey, he had spent several years. While here he wrote a strong letter to the Christians at Rome. He had never been at Rome, but was planning soon to go there (19: 21). It is probable that near about this time he also wrote the letter to the Galatian

churches, which he had several times visited and which were now in serious danger of being destroyed by false brethren.

Paul Training Young Men

Paul returned to Jerusalem from his third journey with a collection for the poor in Judea (Rom. 15: 25-27; 1 Cor. 16: 1-6). He was accompanied by a number of young men whom he was training for stronger work in the service of the Lord (20: 4-6). In this he followed the example of Jesus, who had his apostles and others follow with him in his daily work.

Paul Arrested by the Jews

Paul's work among both the Jews and the Gentiles was exceedingly strong; so strong that the Jews at Jerusalem feared their entire religion was in danger of being undermined, and when he reached Jerusalem they were ready to do with him just as they had done with Stephen. They at once arrested him, and would have mobbed him had he not been protected by the Roman authorities (21: 27-36). The entire remainder of the book (21: 27 to 28: 31) is taken up with the arrest, imprisonment and defence of Paul; first, at Jerusalem (21: 27 to 23: 35), and then at Cæsarea, the Roman capital of Judea, where he was imprisoned two years (24-26), and finally at Rome, where, also, he was imprisoned for two whole years (27, 28).

Paul's Defences

During this prison life he made strong defences for the Gospel at each of these places. While he was in prison at Rome he wrote four spiritual letters, known as the prison epistles: Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon.

Prison Epistles

Later on, and probably after he had made another visit to the churches in Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece, at the very close of his life, he wrote three let-

ters, known as the pastoral epistles: First and Second Timothy and Titus.

If all church history of later centuries could bring to us such unselfishness, consecration, zeal, tact and spirituality, so prominent in the life of Paul, Peter and John, and their associate workers, the world would have received the Gospel long ago in harmony with the great appeals of our loving Master.

Ground of Success

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. What kind of message has the book of Acts?
2. What is its relationship to the Gospels?
3. On what great event does the book hinge?
4. Give the main divisions of the book.
5. What is the nature of the discourses of the book?
6. Draw a map for each of the three journeys of Paul, and mark these journeys.
7. Trace out the journey of Paul to Rome.
8. Give some of the important characteristics of the early Christians.

Lesson XVIII

New Testament

THE EPISTLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

What Are They

The epistles of the New Testament are letters written to churches and individuals for instruction, exhortation, correction and warning. The writers hardly thought that their letters would become a part of the Bible, but these epistles were so freely used and so thoroughly accepted that they naturally took their place in the New Testament Scriptures.

General Groups

We divide them for convenience into three general groups:

1. The Pauline Epistles.
2. The Epistle to the Hebrews.
3. The General Epistles.

THE PAULINE EPISTLES

Pauline Groups

The Pauline epistles are a natural outgrowth of the great missionary efforts of this master missionary. They cover a large part of the latter half of his ministry. They naturally divide into three groups:

1. The early epistles: First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans.

2. The first imprisonment epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

3. The pastoral epistles: First and Second Timothy and Titus.

THE EARLY EPISTLES

First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Corinthians, Romans and Galatians

A brief mention of the circumstances under which these letters were written has already been given in the study of Acts.

First Thessalonians is probably the first New Testament book to have been written.

When and Where Written

It will be well for us to turn to Acts 17: 1-9 and note carefully the circumstances under which the church was founded. A multitude of devout Greeks and of the chief women accepted the Gospel, but the Jews in jealous rage fought it (17: 4-9). Paul went from here through Berea to Athens (17: 10-15). From there he went to Corinth (18: 1). Silas and Timothy came to Paul at Corinth (18: 5). Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy were both with Paul when both the Thessalonian books were written (1 Thess. 1: 1; 2 Thess. 1: 1); when we add to these facts the internal evidences of the books it is practically certain that these books were both written on Paul's first visit to Corinth, recorded in Acts 18: 1-18.

Contents

In the first three chapters of First Thessalonians, Paul expresses gratitude to God and commendation to the people for their faithfulness in accepting the Gospel under severe persecution, and maintaining their true Christian integrity in the face of continual affliction. Chapters 4, 5 are strong exhortations to faithfulness and still deeper consecration, and here also he finds occasion to warn them against a misconception concerning the second coming of Christ (4: 13-18).

Second Thessalonians seems to be an answer to the

Contents

response Paul got from his first letter. It opens with thanksgiving (1: 3-12), and continues the instruction and warning concerning the second coming (2: 1-17), and then closes with a strong exhortation to faithfulness (3: 1-18).

First and Second Corinthians are letters to the church at Corinth.

Circumstances of Writing

The church at Corinth was established on Paul's missionary journey under severe protest of the Jews (Acts 18: 1-18). On his third journey, while he was at Ephesus, he wrote the church at Corinth a strong letter. Through several sources Paul had learned that the church was drifting away from its moorings (1 Cor. 7: 1; 1: 11; 16: 17). He took this seriously to heart and wrote them a letter in the tears of a father's love (2 Cor. 2: 4-11), and he also sent two brethren to deliver his message (1 Cor. 4: 17; 16: 10, 11; 2 Cor. 8: 6; 12: 18). These brethren apparently were Timothy and Titus, and their presence was, without doubt, of great service to the church under these circumstances.

Contents of Letter

First Corinthians is a corrective:

1. The church divided on account of ministerial preference needs to know what true preaching is and what is a preacher's business (1-4).

2. Heathen lusts dare not control the child of God (5-7).

3. The stronger members of the church are not allowed to violate the rights of the weaker (8-10).

4. Worship should be conducted in harmony with God's plan (11: 1-34).

5. The Holy Spirit gives the church unity and large efficiency (12-14).

6. The resurrection of the dead into a life of glory is a well assured fact (15: 1-58).

7. There ought to be a strong collection for the poor Christians (16: 1-9).

8. Farewell (16: 10-24).

Second Corinthians was written a little later than this in Macedonia in response to the answer Titus brought to Paul concerning their attitude to the first letter. (Cf. 2 Cor. 2: 12, 13, with 7: 5-16.)

Glad Response

The first seven chapters are taken up in expressions of gratitude for the way they had received the former message, and in exhortation to deeper consecration and stronger service.

Chapters 8 and 9 are an exhortation to liberality.

Chapters 10-13 are a strong invective against false brethren who, instead of accepting his former message, seem to have used it as a means for destroying Paul's influence in the church.

Defense of Christianity

Galatians is a letter addressed to the churches of Asia Minor, probably the ones he established in his first missionary journey (Acts 13: 14-28). We are not sure when or where it was written, but its import is clear. It strikes right at the heart of the Jewish Gentile controversy under discussion in Acts 15.

In chapters 1 and 2 he strongly defends his own apostleship in unmistakable terms.

In chapters 3 and 4 he clearly shows that Christianity is separate from and far beyond Judaism and the law of Moses.

In chapters 5 and 6 he exhorts the Christians to live according to the demand of their spiritual calling.

When and Where Written

Romans was written at Corinth, on Paul's third missionary journey, just as he was ready to go back to Jerusalem with the collection for the saints. (Cf. Rom. 15: 25-28; 1 Cor. 16: 1-9; 2 Cor. 9; Acts 20.)

He had never been at Rome, but longed to go there (Rom. 1: 11-13). However, he had many dear friends and fellow-workers there (Rom. 16: 3-16).

Plan of Salvation

Aside from the introduction (1: 1-17) and the conclusion (16: 1-27) the book divides into two main sections:

1. The plan of salvation (chapters 1: 18 to 11: 36).
2. The practical bearings of Christian life (chapters 12-15).

THE FIRST IMPRISONMENT EPISTLES

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon

Paul Arrested and Imprisoned

When Paul, at the close of his third missionary journey, came back to Jerusalem, he was at once arrested by the Jews, but taken by the Romans to Cæsarea, where he was in prison two years. From there he was taken as a prisoner to Rome. It was while he was here in Rome under guard for two years (Acts 28: 20, 31) that he seems to have written four deeply-spiritual letters. They are all prison epistles, which hardly could have been written earlier than this.

Higher Life

The letter to the church at Ephesus is a great appeal to this Gentile Christian church to appreciate the love and mercy through which they were saved (chapters 1-3), and to walk worthy of the high calling to which they have been brought (chapters 4-6). This letter will seem more real when we read in Acts 19 the account of the founding of the church, and in Acts 20:

17-38 his farewell address to the elders of the church at Ephesus.

Message of Love

The letter to the Philippians is a beautiful message of love. The church was founded in great conflict (Acts 16: 12-40). His prison life in Rome reminded him of his prison experience while he was with them (Acts 16: 23 ff.).

He remembered their faithfulness and longed to see them again, and was then planning to send Timothy to them, hoping himself to be able to go also, later. In chapters 3 and 4 he carefully warns them against the Judaizing foes and urges them to hold out faithful to the end.

Earnest Warning

Colossians. Addressed to the church at Colossæ, a city in Phrygia. Paul seems never to have been there, but he was much concerned about their welfare (2: 1). The entire message is strongly hortatory to faithfulness and to higher Christian attainment. Evil influences were at work in their midst, and of these Paul carefully warns them (2: 6-23), and over against these vain philosophies, in bold contrast he places the saving power of Christ and his Gospel (3: 1 to 4: 6). At this time he also wrote a letter to the church at Laodicea, but this one has been lost (Col. 2: 1; 4: 16).

The Slave Brother

Philemon is a beautiful little letter of friendship, which seems to have been written and sent when the other prison epistles were. Onesimus, a slave belonging to Philemon while in Rome, came under the influence of Paul and was converted. Paul takes this as an opportunity of showing Philemon that in Christianity a slave is a brother to his master, and he strongly exhorts him to receive Onesimus as such.

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

First and Second Timothy and Titus

This is a group of three letters written by Paul to two of his associate workers.

Circumstances of Writing

There is strong evidence that these letters were written considerably later than the four we have just studied, and that, in the meanwhile, he took another journey among the churches in Western Asia and Eastern Europe. These were written at the close of his eventful life. They are farewell addresses to men who are in a large measure to assume the responsibilities Paul is about to lay down. Timothy seems to be at Ephesus, where early history says he took up the charge after Paul left it.

Keeping the Charge

The main purpose of the first letter is to inspire Timothy to consider well the charge laid upon him to the keeping of the church (1 Tim. 3: 15). There are enemies who would do all they could to destroy the church (1: 3-11; 4: 1-5; 6: 3-10). These must be met and properly handled. The faithful are to be instructed and encouraged (2: 8 to 3: 16; 4: 6 to 6: 2), and then, too, Timothy needs to look to the Source of all guidance and strength (1: 18 to 2: 7; 6: 11-16, 20, 21).

Farewell Address

Second Timothy is Paul's farewell address and is likely the last one of all of Paul's letters. He very strongly exhorts Timothy to faithfulness in the midst of foes and perilous times. He charges him to be faithful in preaching the Word of God, and even pleads with him to come and render him some assistance, as he is about to give his life in sacrifice for the cause.

Large Responsibilities

Titus is a short letter, written to a faithful young minister and comrade of Paul. Paul had placed him in charge of the work at Crete (1: 5-9). Paul realized that he would there have a heavy task, and therefore he encourages him and exhorts him to faithfulness to his ministry.

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. Give three general groups of the epistles.
2. What is their general purpose?
3. Give the three groups of Pauline epistles.
4. Number them thus: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, 12, 13.
5. What is the nature of First Corinthians?
6. What is the nature of Second Corinthians?
7. What two lines of thought appear in Romans?
8. Where was the second group of Paul's epistles written?
9. What is the nature of the third group of Paul's epistles?
10. When was the third group written?

Lesson XIX

New Testament

HEBREWS AND THE GENERAL EPISTLES

Suggestive Readings

1. Christ greater than the prophets and the angels. Heb. 1: 1-14.
2. Christ greater than Moses. Heb. 3: 1-19.
3. Christ the High Priest of the New Covenant. Heb. 8: 1-13.
4. The contrast between the Old and the New. Heb. 9: 1-28.
5. Great examples of faithfulness. Heb. 11: 1 to 12: 13.
6. Living faith. James 2: 1-26.
7. Advancing in Christian life. 2 Peter 1: 1-11.
8. Strong exhortation to diligence. 2 Peter 3: 1-18.
9. Things a Christian ought to know. 1 John, chapters 1-5.

HEBREWS

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians. We do not know who wrote the book or under what immediate circumstances it was written, but the material of the letter makes it plain to whom and for what purpose it was written.

Material of the Book

The message is both argumentative and hortatory. In fact, these two elements are woven in together almost through the entire book. In the book of Romans the first half is argumentative, and the last half hortatory, but in Hebrews each discourse is closed with a strong exhortation.

The author constantly illustrates his thought by the

Fulfilling Types and Shadows

typical significance of the Old Testament types and ceremonies. He frequently draws a strong contrast between the Old and the New. He seems to do this as an appeal to keep the Jewish Christians from drifting back into ceremonialism of the Mosaic religion.

The Supreme Revealer

Christ, as the Revealer, is far superior to the Old Testament prophets, for he portrays the very effulgence of God's glory (1: 1-3).

He is more able to reveal the Father's will than even the angels, for he is the Son and not a servant; a Creator and not a creature (1: 4-14).

On the ground, therefore, of this vast superiority of Christ, the utmost care should be taken to heed his teachings (2: 1-18).

Above Moses

Moses was an excellent servant of God as a prophet and mediator, but his people failed to respond well to his command. Christ is far above Moses, and by all means should have the fullest response (3: 1 to 4: 13).

The True Mediator

Not only is Christ a Revealer that far excels the strongest service of prophets and angels, but he is also a High Priest of the highest type. As a Priest he can enter into the most tender sympathy of the people for whom he mediates (4: 14 to 5: 14). This being true, Christians should bravely press on into the fullest development of Christian character (6: 1-20).

King and Priest

Christ as a High Priest is the final consummation of the Aaronic high priesthood, even though he was not born of the Aaronic lineage, as he was of the royal lineage of Judah. Melchizedek was a great priest of the patriarchal age, whom even Abraham

honored. He did not belong to the Aaronic lineage, for he lived before the Aaronic priesthood began. This man Melchizedek had neither priestly ancestors nor successors, but as a priest he stood alone in his high priestly service (7: 1-25), and as such is a type of Christ.

The Great Offering

Christ, therefore, as a true High Priest of God, offered himself as a Sacrifice instead of offering animals as the priests of former ages had done. He offered himself in the spiritual temple of God's kingdom, rather than in the literal tabernacle and temple of the Mosaic code and, as such, his offering once for all is sufficient for all people who accept it (7: 26 to 10: 18).

Urgent Appeal

Since, then, there is such a wonderful Savior, let us hold fast the confession of our hope, that we waver not; for he is faithful that promised (10: 23).

Record of the Faithful

The remainder of the book (10: 19 to 13: 25) is a series of strong exhortations to faithfulness to the service which is so much larger and so much more spiritual than that of the past ages. Chapter eleven is a record of a number of the faithful worthies of the old dispensation, given here as a cloud of witnesses to encourage the Hebrew Christians to be true to Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of their faith. And as others, and even the Savior himself, endured much for salvation, the chastening of the loving Father should be counted a blessing rather than a hindrance in this great work (12: 1-13).

The message of this book, although written for the special benefit of the Jewish Christians, is exceedingly

An Appeal to the Jews

valuable in showing the typical import of the Old Testament institutions in their relationship to the New Testament age. And then, too, it greatly magnifies the Christ as the true Revealer and Mediator of God and his plan in this better covenant. The divinity of Christ is very strongly set forth when, as the Son, he is exalted far above the angels. The book comes with a tremendous appeal to every Jew who is loyal to the law of Moses, and to every Christian for higher life and truer service.

THE GENERAL EPISTLES

The book of James, like the Hebrews, was written to Jewish Christians. The author is generally supposed to be the elder of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15: 13; 21: 18), the brother of Jesus. The message is a series of exhortations on several important phases of Christian character and service.

James

Overcoming Temptation

Chapter one tells how severe trials and temptations may be turned into blessings if his people only come to God for wisdom and to his Word for the true instruction and guidance.

Living Faith

Chapter two exhorts them not merely to depend upon a historical, assentive faith, but to do the works demanded by the royal law of love and kindness. Chapters three and four follow on in the line of chapter two, pleading for more of that spirit of love and unselfishness that prefers others to self, and thus unifies the Christian community. Chapter five brings home final exhortations to a full surrender of all the earthly possessions, and to patience in persecution. It also gives the Christians the asssurance that in time of bodily

affliction they may be healed if they call the elders of the church for prayer and anointing (5: 13-18).

The two Epistles of Peter are a strong series of exhortations to Jewish Christians, just as are also the books of Hebrews and James. They are a strong plea for a deeper spirituality, which thus faithfully guards against the enemies who are doing all in their power to lead them astray.

Exhortation to Spirituality

He clearly sets forth his own purpose when he says: "This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance; that ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles" (2 Peter 3: 1, 2; 2: 12-15). Again he says, "Ye therefore, beloved, knowing beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3: 17, 18).

Careful Warning

The three Epistles of John are generally accepted to be messages from John the apostle, who also wrote both the gospel bearing his name and the book of Revelation.

The first one of the epistles is written to Christians in general, while the other two are letters of private correspondence, as Paul's letter to Philemon.

The keynote of First John seems to be in 5: 13, where he says, "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God," and in 1: 3, 4, where he carries

That Ye May Know and Have Fellowship

this assurance into practical end of true fellowship and fullness of joy.

The word **know** occurs twenty-six times in these five short chapters. It is not the word which indicates mere intellectual knowledge, but the one which demands experiential knowledge. The author strongly teaches that the Christian may and should know by actual experience through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (2: 20, 27; 3: 24; 4: 1, 2) what Christianity really is and what it demands in the high moral integrity of his own life.

Strong Contrast

In almost every paragraph of this book there is a strong contrast between the false pretense of Christianity, which is darkness and deception, and the genuine life, which is walking in the light and fellowship of God.

There are also frequent exhortations to the end that Christians should love God and one another and holy things rather than love the things of the world, which do not satisfy.

Second John is addressed to the elect body. Some have thought that this term applies to a church rather than to an individual. It is, however, impossible to be certain. It matters very little whether it is personal or general, for in either case the truth is the same.

Watchfulness

It is an expression of joy over the faithfulness of God's children and a strong exhortation and warning against the deceivers of this world.

He also expresses strong hope of meeting these people face to face, that he may bring them a still greater blessing.

Third John is a private letter to Gaius, the elder in charge of a church. It is really a pastoral epistle like

those of Paul to Timothy and Titus.

Pastoral Charge John is giving Gaius advice as to how to solve some difficult problems in his church work. Apparently John hopes himself soon to come to aid him in this work.

Letters of this kind remind us of the great concern the apostles had for the work in general.

Warning and Exhortation **Jude** is a short, pointed message of warning and exhortation to Christians by Jude, the brother of James who wrote the epistle of James. These men are generally believed to have been brothers of Jesus, who were converted after the death of Jesus.

Verses three and four make it plain what the purpose of the book is. Evil men walking after their own lusts were doing all they could to destroy the church, and Jude makes a strong plea for faithful obedience to the Gospel of salvation (verses 17-22).

Suggestions and Questions for Study

1. With what is Christianity contrasted in Hebrews?
2. What about Christ, and the prophets and angels of the Old Testament?
3. What about Christ, and the priesthood of the Old Testament?
4. What is the purpose of the book of Hebrews?
5. Of what two kinds of material is the book composed?
6. To whom was James written?
7. What is the purpose of the book of James?
8. What is the import of First John?
9. What strong contrast appears in it?
10. Write out First and Second John in your own words.
11. Characterize the book of Jude.

Lesson XX

New Testament

REVELATION

Suggestive Readings

1. A vision of the glorified Christ. 1: 12-20.
2. Christ walking among the churches. Chap. 2, 3.
3. Universal joy over the power of Christ. 5: 1-14.
4. Six seals opened. 6: 1-17.
5. The sealing of the saints. 7: 1-17.
6. The Gospel beginning in great conflict. 12: 1-17.
7. Two of Satan's powerful agents. 13: 1-18.
8. Satan cast out of heaven. 12: 7-12.
9. Satan bound. 20: 1-6.
10. Satan cast into the lake of fire. 20: 10-15.
11. The eternal home of the righteous. 21: 1 to 22: 5.
12. Exhortation to faithfulness. 22: 6-21.

This book of Revelation is unique and stands alone in the New Testament. It is what is generally called apocalyptic matter, or a book of visions much like Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah.

It is, like the epistles of the New Testament, addressed to certain churches, and in part it carries the flavor of the other epistles, but it is different from them in that it takes a large panoramic view of the entire Christian dispensation.

Largely Symbolical

The book is, above every other book in the Bible, highly figurative and full of symbolical pictures. It is, therefore, exceedingly difficult of interpretation and becomes the field of much wild speculation. The nucleus of most of these pictures is found in the prophetic books of the Old Testament; in fact, no other book of the New Testament draws so largely on

Much Old Testament Material

the Old Testament for its material as does this one. Not only does it borrow the background of many of its pictures, but it continually weaves in its abstract sayings, always recasting them into its own diction. It is, therefore, necessary, first of all, that we know well the Old Testament, and especially that part of it which points forward to our own age. Then, again, it is absolutely essential that we continually keep in mind the plain teachings of the New Testament, for none of these pictures conflicts with what is elsewhere taught in the Gospel.

Much Care

The first chapter is a general introduction to the entire book. The first three verses give the source of the messages of the book, the means through which it is brought to the world, and the promise of a blessing for those who study and obey it.

General Introduction

God gave the message to Jesus. Notice similar expressions elsewhere (5: 7; John 3: 25; 5: 20; 7: 16; 8: 28; Matt. 11: 25, 27).

Jesus sent his angel to signify to John, who in turn was the witness for the world (1: 1; 22: 6, 16).

The beautiful promise in verse three leaves no doubt that we should carefully study this book and faithfully keep its truth. See also 22: 7.

John's Commission

The greeting in verses 4-8 carries a blessing from the Trinity of the heavenly throne. Verses 9-20 are the commission which John both heard (10, 11) and saw (12-20). John received these messages through visions or spiritual ecstasy (1: 10; 4: 2 cf. Ezek. 2: 2; 11: 1).

The vision of the glorified Christ in verses 12-20 gives

The Glorified Christ

full assurance that the Christ who walks among the churches is fully adequate for their utmost need. From this picture he continually draws as he, in his address to the individual churches, in chapters 2 and 3, instructs, exhorts, warns, rebukes, and promises according to their peculiar needs.

The record in chapters 2 and 3 is not the only message for these churches, but these several messages form a kind of focal point of application for the great truths that follow in the book.

Among the Churches

The number seven throughout this book carries the significance of entirety, and the seven churches are in a general way typical of the church universal. They do not point out peculiar dispensational lines, as is often supposed, but they unite to bear a message to the whole church. In nearly all the wonderful pictures of the remainder of the book we must be careful to keep in mind the earthly background in which the adequate glorified Christ is walking among the churches.

Great Joy

Chapters 4-11 contain the first general section of the book. The one main topic of this section is **the opening of the seven seals.** Chapters 4 and 5 are introductory to this section. In this introduction it seems that almost the entire universe rejoices over the fact that One has been worthy to open the seals. The opening of these seven seals by the Lamb of God is the revealing of seven important facts and phases of the gospel dispensation.

Opening the Seals

1. The promise of victory. 6: 1, 2.
2. Victory through sacrifice. 6: 3, 4.
3. The assurance of justice. 6: 5, 6.

4. The dark forebodings of justice. 6: 7, 8.

5. The promise to the faithful. 6: 9-11.

6. The second coming of our Lord. 6: 12-17. (The interlude of mercy. 7: 1-17.)

7. The final judgment of the wicked. Chap. 8-11.

Repeating the Same Ground

The next general section (chapters 12-20) covers the same ground that chapters 4-11 do, but from a somewhat different viewpoint. This section leaves us in no doubt as to the leaders in the great conflict already mentioned in the former division of the book.

The Jewish mother, who had so long ago been told to travail in pain (Micah 4: 9, 10; Jer. 4: 31; 30: 6), finally gave birth to a Child who should rule the world (12: 5), and to children who were faithful to the commandments of God (12: 17).

Under Protest

But she and her Son and her Seed lived under the severe protest of the powers of darkness. Now for the first time in this book does Satan come into plain view. He came into this world because he was defeated and driven out of heaven, and now for a short season he manifests great wrath on earth (12: 7-12).

Satan

Two of his most powerful agents are brought out into the foreground in chapter 13. They come under the symbolism of two horrid beasts. The first one (13: 1-10) is the bloodthirsty Roman Empire, together with the vast world powers of all the ages as they attempt to thwart the purpose of God. The second (13: 11-18) is the church which, having lost the humility, love, and mercy of the Christ, and having been brought under the spirit of the world, followed in the merciless martyrdom of Neronic glory (cf. John 16: 2-4).

Chapters twelve and thirteen are introductory to this

entire section. These two chapters give us the outlook, but we start with 14: 1 under the strong assurance of the opening of the first seal (6: 1, 2). The mighty array of the Lamb and his followers (14: 1-5) call forth the beautiful proclamation of 14: 6, 7, which is but another version of Matt. 28: 19, 20. Before this mighty host the fall of Babylon is sure (14: 8). Babylon is a symbolism of Rome, the seat of both the adverse powers of the world and the church. Its fall is promised again in 18: 21-24, but is finally realized in 19: 19-21, and Satan and all his followers meet the same awful doom (20: 10-15).

The Gospel Message

The Conflict Is Past

Chapters 21, 22: 5 are the last great sections of the book. The final judgment is past, the world has come to an end and God's people of all ages have been taken to dwell in eternal glory. The rarest gems of this world and the very sun itself seem to lose their glow as they strive to portray the realms of this heavenly glory.

The Glorious Home

The remainder of 22: 6-21 is explanatory and hortatory, and it brings upon us the solemn obligations of the profoundest care in the study of these pages.

Strong Exhortation

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. How does the book of Revelation differ from the other epistles?
2. What relationship does it sustain to the Old Testament?
3. How does Christ walk among the churches?
4. What ground does the opening of the seven seals cover?

5. What two great agencies of Satan appear in chapter 13?

6. What hopeful picture appears in chapters 21, 22?

7. To whom is the promise of blessing given in this book?

Lesson XXI

New Testament

THE POWER OF PRAYER IN CHRISTIAN LIFE

Suggestive Readings

1. The petition and thanksgiving of Hannah. 1 Sam. 1: 10-13; 2: 1-10.
2. David's prayer of thanksgiving. 2 Sam. 7: 18-29.
3. Hezekiah's earnest prayer for the protection of God's people. 2 Kings 19: 15-19.
4. Daniel's prayer of penitence. Dan. 9: 3-19.
5. Ezra's prayer for his people. Ezra 9: 5-15.
6. The prayer the Lord taught his disciples. Matt. 6: 7-15.
7. Jesus committing himself and his people into the hands of the Father. John 17.
8. Jesus' sad prayer in the garden. Luke 22: 39-46.
9. Prayer in time of persecution. Acts 4: 24-31.

Prayer in All Ages

In all ages of the world men have had free access to God in prayer. No matter in what country they lived, to what nationality they belonged, or in what rank in life they stood, men and women alike have had free course to God in prayer.

In the very dawn of the world men began to call upon the name of Jehovah (Gen. 4: 26).

Prayers of All Kinds

Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, prayed trustingly for guidance and received a blessing (Gen. 24: 12-14). Jacob, in the time of trouble, confesses his unworthiness, and pleads for protection in harmony with the promise of God (Gen. 32: 9-12).

Jacob prayed a blessing upon his sons (Gen. 49: 2-27).

The sighs and groans of Israel came up before God (Ex. 2: 23, 24).

Moses pleads for mercy for the people who had sinned (Ex. 32: 11-13).

Moses also pleads for protection (Ex. 17: 4-6).

Gideon pleads for assurance (Judges 5: 36-40).

Hannah prayed for a son and received the blessing of Jehovah (1 Sam. 1: 10-13), and again she praised Jehovah in the fullness of her soul (1 Sam. 2: 1-10).

David prayed a great prayer of thanksgiving (2 Sam. 7: 18-29); and again he gives thanks (1 Chron. 16: 8-36); and again he does (2 Sam. 22: 1-23; 7). In time of severe affliction he pleads for mercy and pardon (Psa. 51: 1-19; 32: 5).

Solomon prays a dedicatory prayer (1 Kings 8: 22-53).

Various Examples

Elijah prayed for a manifestation of Jehovah in the face of his enemies (1 Kings 18: 36-37).

Hezekiah prayed earnestly for deliverance of Judah from its enemies (2 Kings 19: 15-19). Note carefully the answer to his prayer (2 Kings 19: 35-37). Again, Hezekiah prayed in time of sickness and was healed (Isa. 38: 2, 3). Note also the prayer of thanksgiving (Isa. 38: 10-20).

Habakkuk prayed in time of trouble and received much comfort (Hab. 3: 1 ff.).

Daniel prayed in sackcloth and ashes (Dan. 9: 3-19). Note also the answers (20-23). Note also Daniel's habit of prayer (Dan. 6: 10).

Ezra, in deep contrition, prayed for his people (Ezra 9: 5-15). Note how the people entered into the spirit of this prayer (10: 1-4).

Nehemiah prayed earnestly for the deliverance of his people (Neh. 1: 4-11), and thus he came to the king for help.

In this manner we might go on mentioning prayer after prayer in almost every circumstance in life, even

in the Old Dispensation. And how remarkable are the answers!

Christ's True Example and Teaching

It is, however, from Jesus that we have our truest examples of prayer and our fullest teaching. Prayer issued spontaneously out of his soul.

As he prayed in the baptismal stream the heavens opened with blessing and approval (Luke 3: 21, 22).

Before he chose his twelve apostles he wrestled all night in prayer (Luke 6: 12).

As he fed the hungry multitude at Bethsaida he took the simple parcel into his hand and, looking up to heaven, he blessed it (Luke 9: 16).

And when they would have forced him into the throne of an earthly kingdom he went out into the mountains to pray (John 6: 15; Matt. 14: 23).

Life of Devotion

Then, when he was about to give his disciples a true aspect of the glory of his kingdom, as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered and his raiment became white and dazzling (Luke 9: 28, 29).

When he saw how beautifully the loving Father had brought the gospel truth down to the simple and childlike, he, rejoicing in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; . . . for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight" (Luke 10: 21).

Under All Circumstances

Amid the busy throng of life he took time to stop and lay this hands on the little children to bless them (Mark 10: 16).

Peter, under the severe strain of his trial, had the

assurance that Jesus was praying for him (Luke 22: 32).

Absolute Submission

But in the sad hour of Jesus' trial, in the dark night of his betrayal, there in the garden, he prayed alone. His truest disciples fell asleep and he, in the fullest submission, prostrate on the ground, in groanings and tears, prayed to the end of his burden (Matt. 26: 36-46; Heb. 5: 7).

When the sin of all the world was resting upon him, in mercy he forgot not to say to the Father, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23: 34). And with a loud voice he could gratefully say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23: 46). It was not hard for him, who all through his life had committed his soul to the guidance and care of the loving Father, now at the hour of death to entrust his spirit to God.

And, then, finally as he ascended from Mt. Olivet he left a blessing upon the heads of his lonely followers (Luke 24: 51).

Continued Intercession

Still yet, as he sits on the throne of God, he intercedes for his own of all the ages (Rom. 8: 34; Heb. 7: 25); just as he prayed in that wonderful prayer for loyalty and love, and unity and glory (John 17).

But when we turn from the radiance of that beautiful prayer life to the dark, cold formalism of the Pharisaic life we see a contrast which is hardly credible.

Taught as He Prayed

As Christ prayed, so he also taught and, first of all, he said that "God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4: 23, 24). Prayer should spring spontaneously from the heart in adequate expression of what exists

Spiritual

there. Everything else connected with it is incidental and subordinate. Too often, however, the incidentals of time, place, etc., become fundamental, and thus destroy the true effect of the prayer.

What Prayer Is

Prayer is communication with God, and not with man, and must be rendered in the fullest sincerity and in complete unselfishness. The Pharisees prayed much to men and little to God, and the answer came from the source to which it was directed (Matt. 6: 5, 6).

Then, too, prayer is a simple, unaffected message, without the continual repetitions so common in our efforts. The Lord's prayer (Matt. 6: 9-13) was given as a sample of plain, simple prayer, which asks for what it wants. This becomes the true model of simplicity in prayer for God's children in all ages.

Praying in the Name of Jesus

Strong faith in God and his willingness to answer prayer makes prayer availing and really worth while (Mark 11: 22-24). Our heavenly Father is much more willing and able to respond to our needs than our earthly parents are, if we but come to him in full assurance (Luke 11: 1-13).

But our prayers must be fully in harmony with God's plan. We must divest ourselves of all narrow selfishness and ask in the name of Jesus or, in other words, as Jesus would do if he were here, or as he has taught us, that God may be glorified and his kingdom built up (John 16: 23, 24; 14: 12-17; 1 John 5: 14, 15). This is possible only when we are enlightened and controlled by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8: 26, 27; 1 Cor. 2: 9-16; Eph. 6: 18).

United Prayer

Then, too, united effort in prayer adds assurance to the promise, for "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"

(Matt. 18: 18-20). Thus the early disciples met in earnest, availing prayer (Acts 1: 14; 2: 1; 4: 24-31; 12: 12-17).

Power of Prayer

So many of our efforts in Christian life and service are vain and fruitless because we fail to recognize the power of prayer as we ought. Through this means the infinite sources of grace are largely available to the child of God, both for large service of his life, in the spreading of the Gospel, and for the development of his own character into the image and glory of Christ.

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. Give several important prayers of the Old Testament times.
2. What can you say of the prevalence of prayer throughout the ages?
3. Give several important occasions on which Christ prayed.
4. What are some of the important teachings of Jesus on prayer?
5. Give several occasions in which the early disciples prayed.
6. Of what value is prayer to us?

Lesson XXII

New Testament

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

Suggestive Readings

1. The hope of the prophets. Joel 2: 28-32; Jer. 31: 31-34; Ezek. 11: 14-21.

2. Jesus giving the Holy Spirit to others. Matt. 3: 11; John 1: 33; John 16: 7; Luke 24: 49; Acts 2: 33.

3. How to meet the enemies. Matt. 10: 16-23; John 15: 18 to 16: 11.

4. The Christian's guide and strength. John 16: 12-24.

5. A great infilling. Acts 2: 1-4.

6. A great ingathering. Acts 2: 37-42.

7. New filling for new opportunities. Acts 4: 23-31.

8. Living under the power of the Holy Spirit. Rom. 8.

9. Gifts of the Spirit in the work of the church. 1 Cor. 12-14.

10. Lying to the Holy Spirit. Acts 5: 1-11.

11. Grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit. Isa. 63: 10; Eph. 4: 30, 32; 1 Thess. 5: 19.

12. Sinning against the Holy Spirit. Matt. 12: 31-37; Heb. 6: 4-8; 10: 26-31.

The Spirit World

The Bible plainly teaches that there is a spirit realm beyond this earthly sphere. Within this realm lie the mighty forces of the universe, both good and evil. It is there that God abides with all his heavenly hosts. It is in this sphere that our Savior now abides. The Holy Spirit belongs to this spirit realm.

The Trinity

The Holy Spirit is one of the three members of the Trinity and is the Power through which most of the active service of God has always been done in this world.

Old Testament Manifestations

We need here mention but a few of those who in the Old Dispensation were strong servants under the Spirit's control.

Judges

Thus Gideon, though weak within himself, was very successful in the Lord's service (Judges 6: 34).

Samson, too, shook the forces about him and delivered his people from their enemies (Judges 13: 25; 14: 6; 14: 19).

Balaam's curses were turned into blessings through the power of the Spirit (Num. 24: 2).

Moses

Moses and his associates were able to maintain their integrity and meet the severe protest of murmuring rabble (Num. 11: 24-26).

Through this power Joshua was set apart for large service and was given enduring strength (Num. 27: 18; Deut. 34: 9).

David

Through this Divine Power David was enabled to build up such a grand kingdom, and from the same source came his strength to sing songs that still live in the hearts of men and women in every land (2 Sam. 23: 1-7).

Prophets

Thus it was that the prophets could rise out of the very decay of their environments and deliver such wonderful messages for the uplift of humanity (Micah 3: 8; Isa. 61: 1-3; Ezek. 2: 1). Peter called this Spirit in the prophets the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter 1: 11); and the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1: 21).

It was through this Divine Power that God built up

a kingdom for himself in the midst of the many heathen kingdoms of that age. Not all his people, however, were thus highly endowed as these and other leaders were, but the Spirit was striving with them and marking out higher ideals for them (Gen. 6: 3; Isa. 63: 10, 11). And even already Moses longed for the day when all of God's people might come under the control of the Spirit (Num. 11: 29).

Kingdom

To this day of general infilling the prophets looked and for this plead; the day in which the Son of David, the Anointed One, the Messiah, would build up a great spiritual kingdom which would be a blessing to all nations of the world (Dan. 8: 24-26; 7: 13, 14; Isa. 11: 1-10; 42: 1-13); the day in which all of God's people, old and young, both men and women, would yield to this Mighty Power of heaven and would thus give their lives a living sacrifice in service (Joel 2: 28-32; Jer. 31: 21-24; Ezek. 11: 14-21).

The Future

All God's People

John Baptist came preaching that this day was dawning. Jesus came into the world under the administration of the Holy Spirit's power (Matt. 1: 20; Luke 1: 35), and was by the Spirit anointed unto the large service of his life (Matt. 3: 16), and by this Power he went through the severest temptations (Luke 4: 1) out into his life-saving mission (Luke 4: 14-19; Acts 10: 38, etc.).

John's Ministry

Jesus Anointed

The deep spirituality and power of the life of our Lord is a constant appeal to every one who is named after him and professes to walk in his footsteps. When the Savior left his disciples he strongly assured them that he would not leave them alone, but that he would send the Spirit to open their eyes and

Life that Appeals

Great Promises

hearts to the larger truth (John 16: 12-15), and would give them power to withstand all the enemies and speak boldly in the service of the Master (Matt. 10: 19, 20; John 15: 18-27). He says, Remain at Jerusalem until you are endowed (Luke 24: 49; Acts 1: 5, 8).

Strong in Service

It is this that accounts for the marvelous work of these simple fishermen. Contrast Peter at the betrayal and denial (Luke 22: 54-62) with Peter before the thousands of Pentecost Day (Acts 2: 14-42). Again, later on, notice Peter and John trembling before the Jewish authorities and praying for strength of character. They were filled again and spake out boldly (Acts 4: 29-31).

Guidance

When Peter was unable to decide about beginning the Gentile ministry, even after he had had a vision, the Spirit said, Go with them, nothing doubting (Acts 10: 20; 11: 12), and then there came such a powerful manifestation of outpouring upon Cornelius and his house that the last shadow of doubt was gone (Acts 10: 44-47; 11: 15; 15: 8).

Philip, too, in his ministry was directed to the eunuch by the guidance of the Spirit (Acts 8: 29), and thus Paul was kept out of Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16: 6, 7).

Meeting Opposition

Thus all the way along the early history of the church men and women were filled with the Holy Spirit, were enabled by the divine grace to meet the strong opposition, and to grow day by day into the likeness of Christ, being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit (2 Cor. 3: 18), that they might speak forth mightily the saving truth before all classes of people and bring burning conviction to the hardest sinners.

Varied Lines of Service

Under the divine administration of the Holy Spirit the various lines of church work are adequately supplied with perfect symmetry and grace (1 Cor. 12).

Then and Now

What the individual needed then he needs now; what the church needed then it needs now. The promise that came to the individuals and church then comes now and, when it is truly accepted, the man-fearing spirit of the Sunday-school teacher, the personal worker, and the minister will not hinder the work; the stammering tongue will be loosened; the unwilling spirit will say, "Here am I, send me"; the purse-strings will be held in no longer in the face of the dying millions. Where the Spirit of God rules the mammon of unrighteousness can not reign. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8: 9).

Sure Promise

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke 11: 13)? This promise carries only when our motives are unselfish and true and when we do not harbor sin and are truly receptive and open. Too often, however, we grieve the Spirit in not yielding to its dictates, and thus quench the power of promise and unfit ourselves for the largest usefulness and the strongest life.

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. Name some of the important characters of the spirit realm.

2. By what power were the Old Testament men enabled to do such strong service?

3. Give the names of a number of men of such endowment in Old Testament times.

4. What part did the Holy Spirit play in the life and service of our Lord?

5. Give some examples of the work of the Holy Spirit in the apostles and early Christians.

6. What lines of power does the Holy Spirit give Christians?

7. What are the common hindrances to receiving the Spirit?

Lesson XXIII

A Review of the New Testament Lessons

In lesson XIII, The Life and Ministry of Jesus, and XVII, The Acts, we have covered the main historical ground of the New Testament. It is, however, likely that a number of the books of the New Testament were written after the close of the book of Acts, but we have no inspired historical record that goes beyond this book, excepting the incidental mention of historical points in the epistles and Revelation.

Historical Survey

In the lesson on the Life and Ministry of Jesus we have seven important periods covering the life of Jesus while he was here in the world.

Gospel Period

What are these seven periods?

Name them, one by one, pointing out approximately their location on the map.

In the lesson on Acts we have the mention of a number of very important events of the early church as it worked under the inspiration and administration of the Holy Spirit.

The Acts

Notice the three main divisions of the book, chapters 2-7; 8-12; 13-28.

Notice also the great event of chapter two and the gradual development of the church, in numerical strength, in geographical distribution, and in spirituality.

Growth

Note also the great missionary zeal in the face of the severe persecutions. Notice also in Paul's ministry how the epistles came to be written.

Besides these two lessons on the history of the New Testament we have three lessons on the gospels, giving a brief study on the life and teachings of our Lord.

The first two of these lessons, XIV and XV, are brief book studies on the four gospels.

Give now a brief statement of the Gospel of Matthew.
Also of Mark.
Also of Luke.
Also of John.

The fourth of the gospel lessons, number XVI, is a study of the life and teachings of Jesus.

Notice a number of the very important phases of this study:

Character and Teachings

The divinity of Jesus.
The entire consecration and devotion.
The strong service for the salvation of humanity.
The atoning sacrifice on Calvary.
The resurrection and ascension.

And notice also the teachings on the sinfulness of man, the hope of regeneration, and the godly life in the service of evangelizing the world.

Pauline Epistles

We have also two lessons on the epistles; first, the lesson XVIII, the Pauline Epistles in this group:

1. The Early Epistles:
   (1) First and Second Thessalonians.
   (2) First and Second Corinthians.
   (3) Galatians.
   (4) Romans.
2. The First Prison Epistles:
   (1) Ephesians.
   (2) Philippians.
   (3) Colossians.
   (4) Philemon.
3. The Pastoral Epistles:
   (1) First and Second Timothy.
   (2) Titus.

Hebrews and General Epistles

And in addition to the Pauline Epistles we have another group in lesson XIX:

1. The Book of Hebrews.
2. The General Epistles:
   (1) James.
   (2) First and Second Peter.
   (3) First, Second and Third John.
   (4) Jude.

What They Are

These two groups of epistles are a very important part of the New Testament. They are in the main very spiritual and are a veritable storehouse of instruction, advice, warning, and comfort, not only to the persons to whom they were addressed, but to God's children of all centuries of our dispensation.

Revelation

And then finally the book of Revelation, which is the last book of the Bible, and probably the last one to have been written, is a large apocalyptic panorama of the Christian dispensation as it grapples with the great world problems. It ends in the home of eternal glory for all those who serve the Lord in sincerity and truth

Prayer and Holy Spirit

The two devotional lessons, XXI and XXII, are drawn from the entire Bible, but especially from the New Testament. They comprise two of the most vital subjects of the entire Bible.

What is prayer?

What is its value?

What often hinders it from being effectual?

Who is the greatest example in prayer?

What is the Holy Spirit?

What part does the Holy Spirit play in the Christian's life and service?

What requirements are essential to receiving the Holy Spirit?

What adverse attitude do Christians often take against the Holy Spirit and his service?

Lesson XXIV

An Appendix to the Bible Lessons

THE HISTORY AND INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

The inspiration of the Bible is a very important subject. To say that the Bible is inspiried is but another way of saying that it is God's Book, and that it reveals to the human family his message of salvation. It is important because it reveals the only plan of salvation there is, and without it there is no hope beyond this life.

Importance

In the study of this subject four very important questions must be considered:

Four Questions

1. By whom and under what circumstances was the Bible written?
2. How and by whom was it canonized?
3. How was it distributed amongst the people and kept throughout the ages?
4. How was it translated into the various languages of the world?

BY WHOM AND UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES WAS IT WRITTEN?

The Bible was written by a number of men of different nationalities, under various circumstances in life, covering a period of about four thousand years.

Circumstances

The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language and the New Testament in the Greek.

Not very much definite information is given concerning the authorship of the books of the Old Testament.

Moses

It is, however, plainly said that Moses wrote parts of it (Ex. 17: 14; 24: 4; 31: 9, 26; 34: 27, 28; Deut. 31: 22; 32: 3-43; 33: 2-29). The first five books, known as the Pentateuch are, in the New Testament, regularly attributed to him.

The Prophets

The prophets, such as Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Ahijah, Iddo, Shemiah, and others kept historical records which, if they are not the books we now have, were evidently the basis on which they are built (1 Sam. 10: 25; 1 Chron. 29: 29; 2 Chron. 9: 29; 12: 15; 13: 22).

It is, however, in Jeremiah that we have the fullest account and the clearest statement concerning the writing of these books. Jeremiah is told to write his messages in a book and keep them for later service, and we learn that he dictated his message to Baruch, his amanuensis, who wrote it into a leather roll (Jer. 36: 1-32; cf. 45: 1, 2; 51: 60-64). It is likely that the other prophets did the same, although we have no record of it.

David

About one-half of the Psalms are attributed to David, and in the New Testament they are frequently mentioned as having been given by him under the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 22: 43; Luke 20: 42; Acts 1: 16; 2: 25; 4: 25; Rom. 4: 6).

Epistles

In the New Testament the epistles of Paul, Peter, James, and Jude bear the names of their authors, and the book of Revelation is assigned to John. For the authorship of the four gospels, the Acts, and the epistles of John, we are largely dependent upon the witness of the early church fathers of the apostolic and post-apostolic times. This evidence is

Gospels

largely unanimous, and the internal evidence of the books themselves thoroughly agrees with the witness of the fathers. The au-

thorship of the book of Hebrews is still uncertain. Bible scholars have been divided concerning it from the earliest time down to the present.

Luke, in his brief introduction (1: 1-4), tells of the enthusiasm of making records of Christ's life. He also says that it was done by getting the material from those who had been eye-witnesses of his ministry.

Individuality

The writers of the books of the Bible always maintained their own peculiar personalities in their style of thought, expression and vocabulary, and yet there is such a perfect harmony pervading all that it is evident to every sober mind that there is a common Authorship and that the Holy Spirit kept the constant control to a common end.

HOW THE BIBLE WAS CANONIZED

Apocryphal Books

Besides the books of the Bible there are many others known as the apocryphal (hidden) books. Some of these are found in the regular canon of the Catholic Bible, but by Protestants they are not recognized as being inspired. Keeping the apocryphal books out of the Bible and retaining those that are inspired is what we call forming the canon of the Bible.

LXX

After the conquest of Alexander the Great, when the Greek language had become well spread over the world, the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into the Greek. This translation is called the Septuagint (LXX), because it is said to have been translated by seventy Jews. This Greek Bible contains a number of these apocryphal books: First Esdras, Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Sirach, Judith, Tobit, Baruch, Epistle of Jeremiah, First, Second, Third and Fourth Maccabees, Psalms of Solomon, and Enoch. These books are not found in

the old Hebrew Bible, and evidently were largely written after that was canonized. They do not maintain the high tenor of integrity found in the books of the Old Testament, but occasionally dip into the fanciful and mythological spheres.

New Testament Quotations

Christ and the New Testament writers quote very freely from the Old Testament, and even most often from the Septuagint, but they do not quote from the apocryphal books. They always speak of the Old Testament as being thoroughly authoritative. Peter says: "No prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1: 21). Jesus says: "Ye search the Scriptures because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they that bear witness of me" (John 5: 39); and Paul says: "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3: 16).

New Testament Verdict

New Testament Apocryphal Books

The New Testament age also has a group of apocryphal books, some of which are in the main very good, but others of which are exceedingly fanciful and even puerile. They also frequently contradict plain New Testament statements.

Gradual

It was not the work of any one man to sift out the books so as to retain the ones we now have and reject the ones that we call apocryphal. Neither was this done in one generation, nor even in one century; but it was the work of more than three centuries. Some of the books that are now in the New Testament canon were very slow to be recognized, while some of the apocryphal books were rejected with considerable reluctance. Finally the complete canon of the New Testa-

ment, as we now have it, was ratified by the Council of Carthage A. D. 397.

Some one may wonder by what rule and by whose authority this was done. There can be no doubt that the high moral integrity of each book was the main ground on which it was finally accepted. One needs but to read the apocryphal books or other ante-Nicene books to be convinced that the New Testament is inspired and that the others are not. We must not forget that back of all this there was the divine power of the Holy Spirit that exercised control here just as truly as it did when these books were written.

The Ground

HOW THE BIBLE WAS DISTRIBUTED AMONG THE PEOPLE AND KEPT THROUGHOUT THE AGES

The Old Testament was regularly used by the Jews in their synagogue service, and both the Old and New were used by Christians in their services. This called for many copies, but as there was yet no printing, all their demands had to be supplied in written copies.

In Service

Two kinds of material were used for these books: leather and papyrus. The former was called parchment, and the finer qualities vellum. Papyrus was a paper made from the papyrus plant and was most common in Egypt.

Material

Books were in two forms. The earlier of these is the roll, in which the parchment or paper was wound around a wooden stem, sometimes called the "tree of life." The other was in the regular book form, having leaves as our books have. This was called a codex, and was in many respects much handier than the roll.

Two Kinds

Hundreds and even thousands of copies were written

off and sent out to supply the needs of both public and private service of both Christians and Jews.

Great care was taken, and yet in transcribing frequent errors occurred in the omission of a letter or a word, or even sometimes of a whole line. In the course of time there came to be many variations, so that it is estimated that in the New Testament manuscripts extant there are no fewer than one hundred and fifty thousand variations. Yet in all these verbal variations not a single fundamental doctrine is vitally affected.

Frequent Variations

Of course, all the original manuscripts have long ago been lost. There are today no Old Testament manuscripts earlier than the eighth century, and no New Testament manuscripts earlier than the fourth century.

Originals Lost

Many efforts have been made to destroy these valuable documents, but all in vain. Much of the transcribing was done by the monks, and the books were often hidden away in their lonely cloisters. We have today very much better manuscripts and a much larger number of them than there are of the classic authors of the Greek and Roman countries.

Kept

Of the thousands of manuscripts of the Bible extant, only about thirty are complete, and all the others are more or less fragmentary. But even those that are not complete are helpful in forming the best translation.

HOW THE BIBLE IS TRANSLATED INTO THE VARIOUS LANGUAGES OF THE WORLD

The Bible was not written for any one people or nation, but for all the nations of the world. It was written in Hebrew and Greek, but was intended to be translated into every language.

Universal

Alexander the Great conquered the world, that it might come under the control of the Greek pagan religion, but it was into his own language that the Old Testament was first translated and that the New Testament was written. It is not difficult to see how God, as the Eternal Sovereign, overrules men's plans for the larger glory. The Septuagint, which we have already noticed, made during the second or third century B. C., was the first translation of any part of the Bible and the first to lead the way to the spreading of God's Word over the entire earth.

God's Way

During the supremacy of Rome, when Latin was the leading language, Jerome, a very learned and devout man, translated the Bible into the Latin language at Bethlehem (392-404 A. D.) This was called the Vulgate (the people's Bible), and came finally to be adopted by the Roman Catholic church and is still their Bible. It was the first book to be issued by the printing press.

Vulgate

Besides these two versions there are a number of early translations for the accommodation of different peoples: the Syriac, Egyptian, Ethiopic, Gothic, Armenian, and others.

Many Versions

It was, however, during the Reformation that translating the Bible began in real earnest, and it has been continued until the Bible has been translated into every literary language in the world and into some in which there is no literature.

Some of the most important translations during the Reformation were: The Wyclif, 1380; the Erasmus (Greek), 1516; Luther's (German), 1522; Tyndale's, 1534; the Cramner, 1539; the Coverdale, 1557; the Rheims, 1582, and the Authorized, or King James', 1611.

Reformation

Of these the Luther Bible has been used by the Ger-

mans and the Authorized by the English for about three hundred years.

Since these translations were made several of the best manuscripts have been found, and the English language has changed so much that a new version was much needed.

Revision

In 1885 a joint committee of British and American scholars, after fourteen years of hard, conscientious labor, issued the New Revision, which is in some respects nearer the original Hebrew and Greek and is much better English than the Authorized version.

American Version

In 1901 this American committee issued the American Standard Revised Version, which has eliminated a number of the British words and phrases not spoken in American English. This version is in some respects the best English Bible we have today.

Not Divided

In the early manuscripts there are no chapters, verses, nor punctuation, and even the words are not separated from each other. When we take into account all these facts, together with the many variations, few of us realize what a task has been done in giving us the plain English Bible.

Divine Watch-care

In all these problems of translating the Bible, as well as in writing, canonizing and transcribing it, God has kept careful watch that men might in every age and in every language have the same good old Bible that was first given to the human family. Of course there are many verbal variations, but the saving truth has been inspired, and no man has been able to destroy it or even to mar it. It was written, canonized, transcribed, and translated through the instru-

Men and the Holy Spirit

mentality of men, but back of these men has been the constant power of the Holy Spirit.

Thus we see that in the writing, in the canonizing, in the transcribing, and in the translating of the Bible four distinct classes of people have had a hand. Men out of every age have been instruments in the hand of God in giving to the world this Gospel of Saving Truth and God has continually kept watch over its sacred treasure that no hand should mar it.

Pagan monarchs, Christian and Mohammedan fanatics, atheists, rationalists, and critics have each in their turn attempted to destroy it. But still it stands in its simplicity and strength and offers to all the world its saving grace.

Questions and Suggestions for Study

1. Why is inspiration an important subject?
2. Give the four questions involved in the matter of inspiration.
3. What evidence is there as to the authorship of the Bible?
4. What other Books are there in close connection with the Bible books?
5. What does forming the canon mean?
6. How do the books of the canon differ from those not belonging to it?
7. What materials were used in ancient books?
8. Give one of the grave difficulties connected with transcribing the Scriptures?
9. What great truth prevails in the face of the fact that there are many variations?
10. Give the names of two of the early translations.
11. Name several of the important translations of the Reformation.

12. What is the extent of the translations of today?

13. What is the great mission of the Bible?

14. What has been the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Word of God?

THE PROGRAM OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

by

J. Hugh Heckman

Introductory Note

It was unquestionably the object of those who conceived the idea of these studies that they should be practical. This intention was commendable, for religion has a close relation to life. While the writer has kept this objective in mind, he has written with the conviction that it is possible to be in too great haste after the practical. We may do so at the expense of an adequate understanding of what we are about. Receptivity of the Christian faith is an antecedent requirement for effective Christian service. Any program of the Christian religion is necessarily one of continual learning and examination of aim as well as aggressive action.

The chapters which follow will be found occupied by statements of principles in connection with general suggestions of a program nature. Details have been impossible from the limitations of space, and hardly advisable, since concrete lines of action are better suggested by the actual situation existing in various communities. The books suggested for reading are worthy of a place in every religious library. They will in turn suggest yet other reference materials.

Contents

		Page
Lesson I	Essential Features of the Christian Program	173
Lesson II	The Divine Program on the Ages	182
Lesson III	Learning the Program from Jesus	191
Lesson IV	Lessons from Christian History	200
Lesson V	The Present Challenge and Program of the Church	210
Lesson VI	The Christian Program of Spiritual Culture	220
Lesson VII	The Program of Christian Evangelism	230
Lesson VIII	The Program of Christian Education	242
Lesson IX	The Promotion of Christian Ethics	253
Lesson X	The Social Application of Christianity	263

Lesson I

Essential Features of the Christian Program

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15: 58).

What Is a Program?

A program exists first as an idea of something which is desirable. This fertile idea grows into a conviction that the thing should be done and a belief that it can be done. There naturally follows the formulation of a plan of action whereby the desired end may be brought to pass. A program, therefore, in practical terms is an effective way of getting something done. Any program is justly examined for **what** it seeks to accomplish and **how** it proposes to do it. We expect it to have a clear objective, a sensible plan of organization and management, and to be effective in results.

More than three hundred years ago the desirability of an ocean-to-ocean waterway across the narrow Isthmus of Panama occurred to the navigators and statesmen of several nations. Repeated but unsuccessful attempts were made to accomplish it until the project came into the hands of the United States Government. The completion of the Panama Canal in 1914 was the climax of profound thinking, ingenious planning, and persevering industry to meet a recognized need. The world of affairs offers no better illustration of an efficient program than the successful achievement of this greatest public work in the western hemisphere. There was first the task of making the canal zone safe for the health of the fifty thousand men who were to be employed on the work, and we owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Gorgas for his demonstration of the efficiency of sanitary science. The entire canal project lay in the mind and vision of General Goethals before he directed

his army of laborers in the gigantic undertaking of slicing and excavating fifty miles of mountain and plain and lake. Here was exemplified objective, plan, and industry. The secret of such accomplishment has been well phrased in, "Have a work, plan your work, and work your plan."

A Religious Program.

The leading difference between a program of religion and any other is that religion has to do with unseen realities, whereas the ends of business, politics, and social life are tangible. This difference is more fancied than real, because every phase of living is underlaid with moral principles. We have yet to perceive clearly that the sense of spiritual fellowship with God and with men, which is religion, must become pervasive of every aspect of human life before God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven. Any religious program should seek to make this fellowship a permanent and powerful force in humanity, every soul of which has been endowed with religious capacity.

Many good people have lived as though religion, being spiritual, will promote itself without a program. The experience of the centuries is decisively to the contrary. Without cultivation and constructive effort, religion is liable to be lost in indifference or to entrench itself in a credal and ceremonial system. Spiritual fellowship, both human and divine, is to be promoted by worship, teaching, winning, and working. There must be thought, prayer, plan, and action. The work will often be difficult, but never unfruitful. The surest evidence of success is in the resolution of people to live according to the principles of Jesus.

The Aim of the Christian Religion.

The most adequate statement of the objective of Christianity is given in John 3: 16. There is a sum-

mary of the program of God in Jesus Christ and his relation to humanity. It is the program of salvation by faith which believes and accepts and lives. The sequel of such faith is renewal of life into Christian character. The only limit of achievement is "a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph 4: 13). **The aim of the Christian religion is to produce Christlike character and living.** Professor Stalker has happily said that salvation in Christ is threefold: It conserves man's **self,** meaning personality and natural powers; it occupies his **life,** which is to say the opportunity to develop personality by the use of powers; and it preserves his **soul,** his eternal destiny.

Christianity is always larger than any of our definitions of it. The last word of its meaning will never be written in this world. It is a **living** religion, always expanding in significance and power to the growing Christian. The inner life of man is continuously renewed and illuminated by a process of regeneration to make of him "a new creature" (2 Cor. 5: 17). It is in the Christian nature of things that a man shall "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3: 18). Christianity is a **spiritual** religion. It is what it is because the Spirit of Christ is in it. His words and his ideals gradually take root and unfold in the lives of disciples, fulfilling the Scripture that "the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (John 6: 63). The human mind endeavors in vain to understand fully the things of the Spirit. Christianity is an **eternal** religion. Men have a foretaste of eternity when they begin to be Christlike. "This," said Jesus, "is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, Jesus Christ" (John 17: 3). In accepting Jesus Christ we are happy in the assurance that

everything which is of value now will continue in the future.

The Message of Christianity.

The Christian religion has bearing upon every fact in the universe. Out of this conviction the following paragraphs represent an effort to set forth briefly some supreme truths of Christian teaching. As parts of one great whole they are neither severally exclusive nor individually inclusive. It is believed that they are sufficiently comprehensive to comprise a decisive challenge for profound faith in and abiding loyalty to Jesus Christ.

Christianity is a religious interpretation of all life. Back of creation is the will and purpose of a personal Creator. A fine expression of this truth is contained in Paul's address to the Athenians about the God whom they did not know (Acts 17: 22-31). The apostle taught that the spiritual and personal God who made men and things has always maintained a providential interest in them. Men's accountability to God is best discharged through Jesus Christ. While the supreme thing in the universe is spirit, nevertheless we speak reverently of the material world which God has made. Only that religion is acceptable which postulates the abiding presence and activity of God in his universe.

The Christian religion teaches an ethical conception of God. It is a primary test of any religious system to find what sort of God it presents. Heathenism is full of deities who are subject to human vices. Christians worship a God who is good. Of him the ancient prophets spoke as righteous (Amos 5: 24), loving (Hosea 14: 4), holy (Isa. 6: 3; 48: 17), and worthy of emulation (Micah 6: 8). The New Testament exalts him as a holy Father, who is intensely interested in the affairs of his children. His good character is proven by the fact that he does good. His will is never exalted above his righteousness.

"In the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
I know that God is good!

"Not mine to look where cherubim
And seraphs may not see,
But nothing can be good in Him
Which evil is in me" (Whittier).

The Christian message emphasizes the worth of man. Man is worth saving because of his origin and capacity for moral life. Jesus constantly, in precept and example, taught the utmost human value. His cross was the crowning testimony to his sincerity. The religious, moral, and intellectual endowments of man all proclaim that he came from a holy and divine Spirit designed to fulfill a high destiny. The positive emphasis of Scripture is not upon how far man has fallen, but upon how high he may rise.

The Christian religion throws new light upon the problem of evil. In the light of God's holiness and man's moral possibilities, sin is seen to be exceedingly sinful. The Bible has much to say about the lamentable effects of evil upon humanity. Jesus interpreted sin to be a personal denial of divine love and rejection of God's will. He brought into the world an antidote against so base a disposition and nature. There is something in the world that is more powerful than sin. This is redemption, the essence of which is forgiveness (Eph. 1: 7; Col. 1: 14). It is the glory of Christianity that it offers deliverance from sin and the way into a better life through the transformation of grace.

The operative principle of the Christian religion is love. The most distinctive commandment Jesus ever gave is, "Love one another" (John 15: 12). He made the commandment vital by revealing the loving char-

acter of God in his own unlimited devotion. The apostle John declared that "God is love" (1 John 4: 8). Paul called love the basic motive of Christian faith and works, in his classic thirteenth of First Corinthians. All the values of the "law and the prophets" are involved in the "law of Christ" (Matt. 22: 36-40). This law is directed first toward God, whom Christ taught to be supremely worthy of being loved. There follows love toward men as a natural corollary. "Faith is the finiteness, the dependence of love; love is the independence, the infiniteness of faith" (Newman Smyth).

The Christian religion manifests itself in devotion to human welfare. This is love in action, a passion for service learned from him who came "not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10: 45). Christianity has been called "the religion of perfect consecration to the good of the world." This spirit of helpfulness is not limited by what strict right may demand, nor what obligation may impose. The practical meaning of losing self in order to find it is that personality is enriched and developed only when it is unselfishly devoted to human good.

Christianity guarantees a happy future. Little is known of what lies beyond the veil which separates the present from things yet to be, notwithstanding man's eager desire to ascertain it. Christianity alone satisfies the heart, not by perfect understanding but by perfect assurance. Eternal meaning is given to present facts by emphasis upon things most worth-while now. It is not a question of knowing all about the future; it is rather a matter of trust in the Guide who knows both the way and the destination.

The Christian Program.

Christianity includes both faith and practice. It is a

message to be heard and a work to be performed. It expresses itself through ideas and deeds. These foundation truths of the Christian message are the seeds of a working program which aims to project the knowledge of Christ into all the world. Consider the nature of that program which will faithfully represent Christian truth and make it of effective application to human lives:

The Christian program must be true to the spirit of the Christian religion. Spiritual objectives are to be achieved only by methods which are in harmony with the ends in view. Christians are charged with an obligation to spread contagious faith. It is a matter of living an abundant life. The triumphs of Christ's non-material kingdom are the victories of peace, and its progress is accomplished by sacrificial good-will. Those who have a share in its activities proceed and endure "as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11: 27).

The Christian program must be adjustable to human conditions. Christian workers are frequently criticized for failure to adapt their endeavors to the actual needs of the people whom they seek to serve. This weakness is not chargeable to God. The incarnation of Christ was an accommodation of divine grace to the fullest human need. Jesus' life was a demonstration that God's will may be done among men and by them. He set an example for the study of conditions and tactful adaptation to them. Our program must include the same features. We have to deal with the young and aged, the poor and the prosperous, the sick and those in health, and make allowance for all variations due to educational, social, and religious conditions. These people are at home and abroad, in the city and in the country places. The Christian message fits them all. It is committed to us to make an effective application.

The achievements of the Christian program cannot

be wholly estimated by finite standards. Statistics never tell all the truth. It has been suggested that Christians should be counted by weight instead of numbers. Our eyes fail to see most of the real things of life. Men have as yet no satisfactory thermometer by which to measure spiritual progress. It is not intended that they should have, for such judgment belongs to God. The Christian program calls for a work of trust by those who are called to bear a part in God's divine plan for service. We shall best know when the program is succeeding by the effort which those whom we have sought to win, make to live according to Christ.

Suggested Reading

The general nature of this chapter makes it difficult to refer to specific texts as reference reading. For a readable discussion of Christianity students will enjoy King, "The Greatness and Simplicity of the Christian Faith." Other helpful reading will be found in sections of Sheldon, "The Essentials of Christianity," and Chapter VII in Cross, "What Is Christianity?"

A Guide to Lesson Discussion

1. What are the essential elements in any program?
2. Out of your own observation and experience give a clear illustration of an effective program.
3. How does a program of religion differ from any other?
4. Explain why religion needs any program at all.
5. State in words of your own the aim of the Christian religion.
6. What leading qualities of Christianity are presented in the text? What others would you add?
7. Enumerate the seven elements of the Christian

message as treated. Think of some others not included in the lesson.

8. In what respects must a Christian program harmonize with the religion which it is intended to foster?

9. To what particular conditions in your community must a program of Christian work be adapted?

10. By what standards shall we test the success of a Christian program?

Lesson II

The Divine Program of the Ages

"When the fulness of time came, God sent forth his Son" (Gal. 4: 4).

"Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened by the process of the suns" (Tennyson).

History Before Christ.

The student of human history is neither startled nor amazed at the appearance of Christianity into the world's affairs. The coming of Christ was a natural and expected sequence of forces and facts which had prepared the way. The Christian era was preceded by long centuries of religious history which had laid broad and deep foundations for a new revelation of God. Christianity, therefore, is a religion of profound historical connections and is a proof that divine revelation is to be seen in the natural processes of history. "A religion that can boast of any strength and permanency must be able to point to a sacred history." It is a matter of great encouragement to believe that Christianity represents God's great advance step in his divine program of the ages.

The Eternal Purpose of God.

Christian faith holds clearly that the nature of God is unchangeable (Mal. 3: 6; James 1: 17). Men's ideas about him may change, but his character remains unaltered. He is most appreciated for greatness and goodness by those who observe a benign purpose in his dealings with humanity. Such a purpose is inseparable from the Christian idea of God. He has always willed good toward men, and the climax of his revelation of this kindly attitude was announced by the angels when Jesus was born (Luke 2: 14). It was the eternal pur-

pose of God that the fullest expression of his divine love and will should be made to man through his Son when the time was ripe. Christ became the perfect revelation of what God means to the human race (Heb. 1: 1, 2).

The Scriptures teach that Christ was coëxistent with the Father (John 1: 1, 2; 17: 5, 24); that he had a part with God in the work of creation (Heb. 1: 2; Col. 1: 15-17); and that he was like in nature to the Father (Heb. 1: 3; John 1: 18). Jesus spoke of a holy kingdom, in which righteousness and helpful service were dominant features, existing from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25: 34). Paul thought of saints as being chosen in Christ before the world stood (Eph. 1: 4). Peter conceived of the eternal preëxistence of the Redeemer (1 Pet. 1: 20), and the same idea is held by the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 9: 26). The vision of the Revelator so far identified Christ with God's purpose of the ages that he spoke of him as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13: 8). The effect of all this teaching is to show that Christ is inseparably associated with the purpose of God for blessing the world. The limits of our study forbid a discussion of how sin has affected the original purpose of God. It is sufficient here to say that the redemption of Christ is the divine method of overcoming sin.

The Religious Nature of Man.

Christianity really began when man was created in the moral and mental image of God (Gen. 1: 26). It was then that a religious capacity became the common property of the race. Professor Fiske declares that religion "is the largest and most ubiquitous fact connected with the existence of mankind upon earth." Dr. Herbert L. Willett says, "Of all the interests which have engaged the attention of humanity, religion has proved the most powerful and the most inspiring. It

is only one among many such objects of attention, but it appears the most pervasive and inescapable. Men have concerned themselves with a great variety of affairs, such as food, clothing, shelter, mating, family life, industry, war, government, institutions, customs, and traditions. But above all there has been the brooding and persistent sense of relationship with higher powers. Inspired by that sense the innumerable expressions of the religious life have taken form in doctrine and ritual. Hardly a community in all the world is without them. Individuals there are who profess to be religionless, but no race, or nation, or tribe. It would seem to be the most essential characteristic of the intellectual and emotional life of mankind."

The meaning of Christianity for this universal religious capacity is that Jesus Christ fully occupies and satisfies it. His personality and spirit is the complete reward of man's search after God. No other religion meets man's spiritual need so adequately. "Jesus is the one Person in history in whom God certainly finds us and we find God" (King). The Christian ideal is coëxtensive with the whole of human life and is comprehensive of all good for it. We may pray the prayer of St. Augustine, "Man was made for Christ and his heart is restless till it rests in him," and say with Browning,

> "I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ
> Accepted by the reason, solves for thee
> All questions in this world and out of it,
> And has, so far, advanced thee to be wise."

Heathen Anticipations.

The whole human race has of old been groping after light according to its religious instinct. Heathenism has been called "religion growing wild." God has never been partial to the nations of the world, and if any found themselves in moral darkness it was due to

their desertion of the light they had. There is a moral imprint upon the human heart by creation by which every man has sufficient knowledge of divine law to make him morally responsible (Rom. 2: 14, 15). The Scriptures contain abundant evidences of what the possibilities of the Gentile people were.

Recall the reverent character of Melchizedek (Gen. 14: 18, 19), the faith and works of Rahab (Joshua 2: 9), the virtue and love of Ruth (Ruth 1: 16), the repentance of Nineveh (Jonah 3: 5), and the world-wide missionary spirit of Psalm 67. Gentile kings were made servants to accomplish the will of God respecting the Jewish nation (Ezra 1: 1-4; Isa. 44: 28). The non-Jewish Magi represented the reception of the Christ by the Gentile world (Matt. 2: 1). The early Christian missionaries often found the Gentiles more responsive to their message than the prejudiced Jews (Acts 13: 46; 18: 6).

There are evidences that every ancient civilization contained the germs of hope in a better world-order to come. An aged Chinese woman, upon hearing for the first time a description of the Christian God from the lips of a missionary, said, "I always thought there ought to be a God like that." The prophet Haggai, while encouraging the remnant of Jews in their native land to faithfulness, based his exhortation on God's promise to Israel as the people through whom "the desire of all nations shall come" (Hag. 2: 7). The American Revision reads, "the precious things of all nations," indicating that the most dearly-prized possession of any people is their hope for a better future. It is a historical fact that the longings of humanity center about a golden age, a millennium, a glorious social order to be. Such anticipations are foreshadowings of the holy moral kingdom established in Christ.

The brightest side of heathenism is represented by occasional persons who stand out as precursors of Christian truth. Five centuries before Christ there were Greek philosophers who discovered humanitarian principles which are basic in Christian teaching. There were Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle who made morals the chief subject of consideration and impressed the idea that life is to be devoted to worthy ends. In the Roman world, contemporaneous with Christian beginnings but independent of their influence and typical products of heathen civilization, were moralists like Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Plutarch, sometimes called "half-Christians," who believed that virtue arose from divine sources and recognized man's need of help from powers higher than himself to escape from sin. All the truth at which these men arrived enriches the Christian view of life. Their teachings reach completeness in the light of Christian revelation. Every advance step they made ripened the world for Christianity. The Christian Tertullian said of such as they that their writings reveal "the testimonies of a soul constitutionally Christian." They groped after the God whom they did not know, and dreamed of better things than they knew. By their unconscious anticipation of Christian truth they helped make the Gentile world ready for Christ, to the shame of the Jews (Matt. 8: 10; 15: 28; Luke 7: 9).

A further study of historic religious systems would show how, in spite of corrupting defects, they were used by God to prepare the world to receive Christianity. Religions like Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Mohammedanism have their elements of strength, but Christianity matches their excellencies and avoids their weaknesses. Out of them came conceptions of one righteous God, divine revelation, redemption, forgiveness, human brotherhood, and future life, which must

be taken as providential preparations for Christianity, the religion of perfect good.

The Hebrew Nation.

He who would understand Christianity must know much of Israel, in whose history are to be found the roots of the Christian faith. The Jewish nation really existed for a religious purpose. "The history of the Hebrew people is, at the foundation, the history of the true religion growing through all the stages of progress unto its consummation. . . . The whole ancient world had for its object to seek the true religion; but this people alone finds its being on earth exclusively in the true religion, and thus it enters upon the stage of history" (Ewald). While in the eternal purposes of God forces were at work in heathenism preparing mankind for salvation, so in Judaism was salvation being made ready for mankind.

Hebrew history began with the call of Abram and the covenant God made with him (Gen. 12). The succeeding years indicate the course of divine revelation in producing spiritual children of Abraham whose faith, like his, should open their hearts for Christ. It was from these that the Lord was destined to come, as we may see from the early chapters of Matthew and Luke. (Compare John 1:47: Luke 1:6; 2:25, 38.) It was never true that Israel in the flesh was superior to other people; their significance was a matter of spirit. (See Luke 3: 8; John 8: 31-44; Gal. 3: 7; Rom. 2: 28.)

The great elements in the Jewish program of laying the foundations for Christianity were **promise, law,** and **prophecy.**

In the first of these God disclosed to Abram his benign purpose for the whole world (Gen. 12: 3). This gave to the Jewish people a tremendous missionary outlook. Throughout the days of the patriarchs God dealt

on friendly terms with Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, and Israel passed into the period of national formation.

The law was given through Moses as an expression of divine will to act as a tutor to lead its possessors to Christ (Gal. 3: 24). Under its influence the nation passed forward into political organization, the founding of a kingdom upon a great religious ideal. The law concerned itself with rituals and oracles as a course of discipline for Israel to exalt righteousness in being witness to the power of God in human life.

The great days of prophecy began with the period of national decline. It was in reality a combination of promise and law in an endeavor to hold the Hebrews true to their high destiny. The prophets studied and interpreted the past and present history of Israel in terms of the working out of this destiny. They were ministers of the spirit of religion, to whom Christ was directly related by spiritual ties. They mark a distinct advance in ethical conceptions of God, his relations with men, and men's relations with each other. They taught that true religion is of the heart, and that ritual is only a means of aid to moral goodness (Hos. 6: 6; Amos 5: 15; Isa. 1: 16). Worship was for them vitally concerned with attitude and conduct (Mic. 6: 6-8). Personal religion was bound to express itself in good social conduct (Amos 5: 24; Mic. 3: 1-8). A remarkable summary of the spiritual teachings of the prophets is found in Isa. 11: 1-9.

While the exile of Israel was a misfortune from a political point of view, it was to prove a universal blessing. To the Jews themselves it was the means of saving them to their spiritual destiny. They were taught to think in terms of the whole world instead of a single nation. Their vision was broadened regarding God's great missionary purpose for them. It was their necessary preparation for a clear discovery of mono-

theism and a universal brotherhood based on godliness and service. To the Gentile world this chastening experience of the Hebrews held out the promise that the divine plan for them would not be frustrated by a complete failure of the chosen people. It was a purified remnant which returned to Palestine and lent themselves to the consummation of God's program for the Messiah.

"The Fulness of the Time" (Gal. 4: 4).

"Heathen starlight and Jewish dawn both were fulfilled in the sunlight of Christianity." Long centuries in the slow development of moral forces in the heathen world and in religious Israel at last bore fruit when "there came a man sent from God whose name was John" (John 1: 6), declaring the approach of him who was the direct link of connection with the prophets of Israel. Christ came as the natural and timely consequence of divine purpose and plans. He was the Hope of Israel and the Light of the Gentiles. For him the heart of the world had long been lying in expectancy; in him does the moral need of humanity find satisfaction. May it be granted to each of us, that privilege of inspiration to perceive him as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16: 16).

Suggested Readings

Sheldon—"The Essentials of Christianity," ch. 1, 2.
Hyde—"Five Great Philosophies of Life."
Walker—"History of the Christian Church."
Schaff—"Church History," Vol. I.
Ewald—"The Story of the People of Israel."

A Guide to Lesson Discussion

1. Of what value is it to think of Christianity as a consequence of preceding historical causes?

2. Discuss the relation of purpose to character as this applies to God. How is Christ related to the eternal purpose of God?

3. State the significance of Christianity for the religious nature of man.

4. Name five Bible characters who illustrate the spiritual possibilities of the Gentiles.

5. How would you prove that God has never been partial to the Gentile world in his attitudes and dealings with men?

6. What was the primary object for which the Hebrew nation came into existence?

7. Discuss the place of **promise, law,** and **prophecy,** respectively, in the individual and national program of Israel.

8. How did the exile of Israel fit into the program of God?

9. Sum up the chief features of history which made the coming of Christ timely.

10. Would you say that the same forces which brought Christ to the world are at work today in an effort to make him become the personal Savior of every man? What share have we in this process?

Lesson III

Learning the Program From Jesus

"Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were possessed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10: 38).

"God never gave man a thing to do concerning which it were irreverent to ponder how the Son of God would have done it" (George Macdonald).

The Supremacy of Jesus.

An incident is related in which a group of English men of letters were assembled. The conversation turned to the feelings which a person has in the presence of great men. Shakespeare had been mentioned. Then spoke Charles Lamb, "Should William Shakespeare come into the room we would all rise; but if Jesus Christ should enter we would all kneel."

The world will find its proper attitude toward Jesus Christ when every tongue shall praise him in worship. The meaning of Christianity is centered in his personality. Not only is he the Foundation and Inspiration of the religion which bears his name; he is its very Life. The greatest contribution which Jesus ever made to men is himself.

Jesus is supreme in his **person.** The first adequate explanation of him is as the "Son of God" (Luke 1: 35; John 20: 31). By this expression his origin and authority are best accounted for (Luke 22: 70; John 9: 35-37), and this identity believed renders every word and deed of his believable. A second favorite description of the Gospels for Jesus is as the "Son of Man" (Matt. 16: 13; Mark 10: 45; Luke 19: 10). The meaning of this term as used in Scripture is no less Messianic than

the other, but Christendom has understood it to imply an infinite sense of brotherhood in Jesus for humanity. This understanding is true to fact. Our Lord combined in his person an inseparable intimacy of God with men.

Jesus is supreme in **character.** Critics seek in vain to discover defects in the moral nature of Christ. Equally fruitless is our attempt to describe his unimpeachable virtue satisfactorily. A fresh survey of his purity causes the student to aspire to purify himself "even as he is pure" (1 John 3: 3). He was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4: 15). Misunderstood, persecuted, betrayed, still he ministered with undiminished love and full forgiveness. He moved before God and among men with a perfect balance of truth and grace, gentleness and patience, sympathy and helpfulness.

Jesus is supreme in his **influence.** "Three short years have done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of the philosophers and all the exhortations of the moralists" (Lecky). Mr. H. G. Wells recently said: "His is easily the dominant figure in history. . . . A historian simply cannot portray the progress of humanity honestly without giving a foremost place to a penniless Teacher from Nazareth. . . . A historian like myself finds the picture centering irresistibly around the life and character of this simple, lovable Man. The permanent place of power which he occupies is his by virtue of the new and simple and profound doctrine which he brought—the universal loving Fatherhood of God and the coming of the kingdom of heaven. . . . The world began to be a different world from the day that doctrine was preached."

> "Our Lord and Master of us all!
> Whate'er our name or sign,

We own thy sway, we hear thy call,
We test our lives by thine.

"We faintly hear, we dimly see,
In differing phrase we pray;
But dim or clear, we own in thee
The Light, the Truth, the Way" (Whittier)!

The Mission of Jesus.

The thought that Jesus appeared in compliance with an eternal and divine plan was presented in a previous chapter. Early in life he was conscious that he was sent on no individualistic mission; that he must be about his Father's business (Luke 2: 49). "I came forth from the Father," said he (John 16: 28), and "I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 5: 30). All his ministry is marked by a keen sense of kinship with the divine and of coöperation with universal purposes (John 10: 30; 5: 17; 12: 27). He came to fulfill the law and the prophets (Matt. 5: 17), and proved his right to do so by his ability to state their fundamental meaning in concise form (Matt. 22: 36-40). He began his active ministry by an announcement in the synagogue at Nazareth, which clearly declared the obligation and nature of his Messianic work (Luke 4: 16-21).

Jesus came **to reveal God to men.** Much was said about God before this new revelation, but little was known in an accurate way. This disclosure of Christ's was not to be by way of a philosophy about Deity, but a living exposition of what God is and does. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5: 19). "The Word was God" (John 1: 1), and "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth" (John 1: 14). As the medium of divine grace the first business of Jesus was to declare the friendly attitude of God toward men and make his lovableness a real incentive for human affec-

tion. Therefore the revelation of Jesus concerning God was as a benign Father and a helping Friend. Jesus was alone visited with the qualifications for revealing the divine nature, by the knowledge involved in his holy kinship (John 1: 18). Therefore he could rightfully lay claim to being the only Way by which men might know the Father (Matt. 11: 27). It is the supreme quality of the Christian Gospel "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4: 6).

Jesus came to **redeem men to God.** A sympathetic review of his ministry and a personal appropriation of his grace is sufficient to draw from any sinner the acknowledgment: "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1: 15). The Master very early understood this work to be one of sacrifice (Mark 10: 45), in which love and mercy would unite to rescue men from the lamentable results of sin (John 3: 16). He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philpp. 2: 8), and is the world's only Savior (Acts 4: 12). "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2: 2). "For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him" (John 3: 17).

Jesus came to **establish the kingdom of God.** He was appointed to bring into fact what had formerly existed as a promise. He found this term current in the thinking of the Jews, who were looking for a restoration of their lost political power. John the Baptist announced the kingdom when he heralded the appearance of Christ. But the whole kingdom idea was to be given new meaning by Jesus. "My kingdom is not of this world," he explained (John 18: 36). It is a spiritual social order, centered in character, which seeks and does God's will.

Jesus set about making it real and operative in human affairs, "as in heaven, so in earth" (Matt. 6: 10).

The Program of Jesus.

The identity and mission of the Master furnish idea and direction to his program. We seek in vain for a formal outline of his activity; instead it is necessary to study a life moving among human conditions and adapting his spiritual ministry to needs as he met them. Setting himself seriously to his redemptive task Jesus "went about doing good" (Acts 10: 38). His plan was simplicity itself. Matthew makes a general statement regarding his work in 4: 23, "And Jesus **went about** in all Galilee, **teaching** in their synagogues, and **preaching** the gospel of the kingdom, and **healing** all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people."

Jesus lived the kingdom-life. He accepted John the Baptist's identification of himself and the kingdom reality. His example became his teaching platform. While he was stepping on the earth he was conscious of walking with God. By natural demonstration he set forth an ideal for human conduct, an ideal as broad as life and unlimited by time and circumstance. He maintained his relations with God by a constant habit of prayer, and his relations with men by a consistent attitude of service. He gave real meaning to faith by exercising a sublime trust in God and the triumph of truth. He proved himself the Great Physician by ministering to afflicted bodies and distressed souls. He infused inspiration into common tasks by connecting the will of God with the doing of ordinary duty. His personal example was a standard of what a man's life in the kingdom ought to be, and by God's grace can be.

Jesus taught kingdom-truth. His life was the back-

ground for his teaching. Never did teacher make more effective use of the principle that lessons are enforced by the personality of the instructor. All his graciousness in deeds made points of contact for sowing seeds of truth in the hearts about him. He disclosed the Head of the kingdom as a divine Father, who "loves us every one as though there were but one of us to love." Jesus manifested the nature of spiritual fatherliness in his own deeds and words. He used familiar illustrations to show how close God is to men and their affairs. He taught that the God of nature, providence, and grace are one and the same. He declared that the members of the kingdom are they who delight in the will of God and are members of his family (Mark 3: 35). They have renewed their lives by teachable spirits into Christlikeness (Matt. 18: 3). They have learned from Jesus how to bring God's will and righteous character into domestic, religious, business, and social life. The law of the kingdom is love, an attitude and a rule of conduct. To love God supremely and men equally is the essence of all true religion. Jesus was always on the alert to show how truth and love and immortality are supreme in the universe and may be freely shared by all.

Jesus called men into kingdom-life. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11: 28). His message had an attraction for all classes of people because it appealed to universal human need. The poor were met with sympathetic understanding and the rich with urgent warning against the deceitfulness of material wealth. Special consideration was given to the unfortunate. Sinners were made welcome in his presence. It was his method to speak for the kingdom upon every occasion which presented itself. Multitudes hung upon his words and "the common people heard him gladly." To the crowds his words were of necessity general, but he always tried

to cultivate curiosity into faith. His most effective instruction was given to small groups where personal application was possible. The cleansed leper and healed paralytic had not far to go from gratitude to genuine faith. None ever listened to Jesus in private or in public without learning anew that the temporal and material exist to serve the spiritual. He was confident that truth and the human heart were made for each other, and his whole program revolved about the task of bringing them together.

Jesus developed kingdom-leaders. It was his desire that every disciple become a winner of souls. In the short period of his ministry it was impossible that all who heard his message would understand it sufficiently well to become teachers. The fact is that there were none who really understood Jesus clearly. From among his disciples he chose those who manifested special capacity for leadership and gave careful attention to their development, instructing them in principles of the kingdom which would become clearer in the course of events. So it was that the twelve constituted a circle about the Lord which contained the germs of organization for the future of his church. Not until after the resurrection did their personal love and loyalty to Jesus become intelligent faith in the cause for which he stood.

Jesus made the kingdom-sacrifice. It is the mystery of the kingdom of God, and its glory, that life must be surrendered in order to save it. The world of humanity would never believe this paradoxical principle if Jesus had not demonstrated it so completely. Since he proved it to be true it is easy to read the achievements of progressive history as a succession of living deaths for causes that are worth while. Jesus began to die to self-will when he assumed the task of carrying

out fully the Father's will. The sacrifice endured throughout his ministry and was complete only with the cross. We do not comprehend the full meaning of this sacrifice, but the fact is certain that human conditions made it necessary. It was a permeating phase of Jesus' revealing and redemptive program.

Our Imitation of Jesus' Program.

He who seeks to have a share in the program of the Christian religion can never afford to quit studying the program of Jesus. The ministry of the Master will always stand as an inspiration for Christian work. But to what extent can we imitate his method of work? Intelligent imitation of Jesus means an imitation of his influential leadership, power, authority, and example applied to the conditions of our own life. He gave an ideal which is authoritative and dynamic. Of this ideal Robert Louis Stevenson said, "What he taught was not a code of rules, but a loving spirit; not truths, but a spirit of truth; not views, but a view." The power of God was the secret of Jesus' effective ministry. It may also be the secret of our success. The first step in imitation of his program is loyal discipleship, and the second is a permanent and growing conception of the way in which Christian faith is to be applied to the conditions of life as we know them.

Suggested Readings

Rhees—"Life of Jesus of Nazareth."
Hillis—"Influence of Christ in Modern Life."
Eddy—"Facing the Crisis," Chapter I.
Clarke—"The Ideal of Jesus."

A Guide to Lesson Discussion

1. By what two prominent terms does the New Testament describe the person of Jesus?

2. In one statement express your best impression about the character of Christ.

3. What is the best evidence to the supreme influence of Jesus?

4. Discuss the threefold mission of Jesus as treated in the lesson. Would you state his mission differently?

5. What is the best New Testament text you have found for the program of Jesus' life-work?

6. Discuss the importance of Jesus' personal example in the performance of his mission.

7. State several important teachings of the Master regarding the kingdom of God.

8. What responsibility does the confession of Christ lay upon every disciple?

9. What is it that makes necessary the element of sacrifice in kingdom-life?

10. Make a clear statement of the best lessons you learn from a study of Jesus' plan of work.

Lesson IV

Lessons From Christian History

"Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1: 8).

"From generation to generation the spiritual church is rising upward toward its perfection; and though one after another of the workmen pass away, the fabric remains, and the great Master-builder carries on the undertaking" (W. M. Taylor).

"That which history can give us best is the enthusiasm which it raises in our hearts" (Goethe).

The Genius of Christianity.

The Gospel was introduced into the world out of a Jewish setting, but like leaven it issued quickly into a world-influence irrespective of race and nationality. The thoughtful student stands in awe before the demonstrated power of the religion of Jesus Christ. Its genius is seen in its power to propagate itself. This is accomplished by the touch of life upon life, the spread of a contagious faith. Jesus enunciated the chief duty of members of the kingdom of God as a responsibility to carry the message of salvation world-wide (Matt. 28: 19, 20). Christian history is therefore a record of the progressing kingdom of heaven upon earth.

This history has to do chiefly with the activities of the church, a divinely-appointed agent to promote the spiritual kingdom. The beginnings of the church date back to the association of Jesus with the disciples, but with him its organization never went beyond the merest outline. He was concerned with planting an ideal in their hearts, in confidence that his commission to them would find a natural and effective way of transmission. From the outset Christ has ever been the Authority and Inspiration for the church, "which is his body"

(Eph. 1: 22). Its genius is the living Lord in the hearts of his people, moving them to be spiritually influential.

The Apostles' Response to Jesus' Commission.

The apostles began their Christian experience as a personal fellowship with Jesus. When he left them it was necessary for them to find an adjustment to their faith without his personal presence. They were not left without inner guidance, granted in full measure on Pentecost in the Spirit of power for utterance and action. Their plan of movement was to do simply what lay before them as the next step. Organization developed naturally as the need for it arose. The apostolic period to the close of the first century is of utmost importance in a study of the Christian program. Let us consider several important lessons we learn from it:

1. **Christian Brotherhood.** The disciples of Jesus had the best of cause to test the strength of a common love and hope in the events subsequent to the crucifixion. The resurrection relieved their despair, and the ascension promises left them in perplexed anticipation. Then came power and understanding and influence and added believers (Acts 2). A happy group composed the Christian community in Jerusalem, as though but one heart were throbbing in the joy of the newly-found faith (Acts 2: 44; 4: 34, 35). The historical form of this fraternal state in which they had "all things common" persisted only as long as it was useful to the establishment of the new movement, but its spirit remained to characterize all Christian relations in any age. Especially by Paul the idea of brotherhood was expanded to comprehend dealings with the community at large, as citizen (Rom. 13: 1-7), and neighbor (Rom. 13: 8-10; 15: 1-3). It is the spirit of Christian good-will to all.

2. **Christian Stewardship and Benevolence.** None at

Jerusalem called what they had their own; their goods were devoted to the cause. None had need because they provided for each other (Acts 2: 45; 3: 6; 5: 15, 16; 6: 1-3). This was the fruit of love and an unselfish spirit which is inherent in the Christian religion. Material things are held to be of value as they are serviceable to the life of the spirit.

3. **Fearless Witness.** Christianity first meant to these early disciples allegiance to a Person, and the spirit of loyalty to his ideal and commission was dominant in their hearts. The principal business of their lives was to make Christ known. Christ in them was their hope of glory and they were not ashamed of their hope. Their bodies were living sacrifices devoted to spiritual service (Rom. 12: 1), and their love of God made them fearless of men. This was the development of the true martyr spirit, determined to bear witness at whatever cost (Acts 4: 19, 20; 5: 20-32; 20: 24; 21: 13). It is true that the time came when many courted death as the highest evidence of devotion, but this extravagant emphasis does not lessen the genuineness of love for the truth which believes,

> "'Tis man's perdition to be safe,
> When for the truth he ought to die" (Emerson).

4. **Democratic Organization.** The apostles were naturally leaders of the early Christians, but their assumption of authority was becomingly modest. It was a far different spirit from that in which they had striven for favor before they realized the spiritual nature of the kingdom of heaven (Luke 22: 24). There was no complicated machinery of organization at the beginning They met each need as it arose by appointing some one to look after it. With growing membership a natural need for distribution of work was expedient, and the logical lines of division were those of spiritual ministry

and business management. A definite office of ministry of the word existed from the beginning, first with the apostles and later with others of their appointment (Acts 6: 2; 13: 1; 20: 17; 1 Thess. 5: 12, 13). The selection of the deacons (Acts 6: 1-6) illustrates the democratic principles by which the affairs of the church were participated in by the membership. With passing years the lines of ministerial activity became more diversified, as is evident from the lists given by Paul in texts like Eph. 4: 11. A simple religion for the common people, motivated by love and manifested in living, makes every member feel a personal interest in its organized promotion by giving him a share in it.

5. **Growing World Vision.** The Christian community at Jerusalem was largely Jewish. This meant that a great deal of racial prejudice had to be overcome on the matter of receiving non-Jews into the church. Two types of Christianity appeared very early. One of these insisted that Gentiles must become Jews to be Christians; the other denied the necessity of this. The Jerusalem Christians continued to worship in the temple and insist upon observance of the law (Acts 11: 1-3; 15: 1; 21: 20). Enlightenment, even to the leaders, came slowly. Philip's successful evangelization of Samaria required an apostolic investigation (Acts 8). Peter was led to accept Gentiles by faith only after rather drastic proof that it was God's pleasure (Acts 10). Paul became the chief exponent of salvation by faith on the part of any man (Gal. 2: 7-10). The memorable council recorded in Acts 15 brought the whole question to an issue for settlement, with the solution of which it seems clear that some of the Jerusalem Christians were never satisfied. The successes of missions among the Gentiles brought about a gradual acknowledgment that the kingdom of God is the privilege of all men on an equal basis of faith in Christ, and the time came when very few

were willing to deny that the great objective of the Christian religion is to bring the world under the Lordship of Jesus.

6. **Christian Literature.** As the communities of Christians became numerous some kind of correspondence between them was inevitable. The leaders would naturally send messages, both verbal and written, to the scattered congregations. The earliest literature of the New Testament was composed of the Epistles of Paul, and probably that of James. These were a part of the apostolic program, being messages of encouragement, instruction, and counsel in their Christian experiences. In them we have a priceless heritage of records regarding the thought and life of the early church and the interpretation of Christianity from its first applications. The Gospels were written later, as the demand became urgent for the record of Jesus' life and teachings to be preserved by those who had known him. It is possible to detect a program-purpose in each of the four Gospels. Matthew wrote to prove Christ as the Jewish Messiah, but was carried by inspiration to apply his teachings to all humanity. Mark presented Jesus as the Lord of all life, with unlimited power and energy. Luke placed emphasis upon the kingdom of God as a universal social order. Out of a clear perception of the inner nature of Christianity, John wrote to establish the spiritual life of God's children in Christ.

The Christian program of the apostolic age was decidedly evangelistic. The truth was spread by personal effort and coöperation in living, by word, and by writing. By 100 A. D. Christianity had spread from Palestine northward to Asia Minor, southward to Africa, eastward to Arabia, and westward to Spain. It is estimated that there were then as many as five hundred thousand converts. The period yields inspiration for all the Christian ages to follow.

Giving Form to Christian Doctrine.

The three hundred years immediately following the first Christian century are particularly noted as the period in which Christian doctrine was shaped into formulæ. Evangelism was by no means lacking during these years. Fervor was inherited from the apostolic age, which carried the Gospel into such new territory as Mesopotamia, Persia, Armenia, and the British Isles. The membership of the church was increased to upwards of thirty millions by the beginning of the fourth century. Not only did the message of compassion and love attract the lowly classes, but also the wealthy and many of high standing became followers of the humble Nazarene. Much of the success of this period is to be attributed to the genius of the apostles in laying sound foundations for the truth. They had started a movement which was to revolutionize the religious aspect of the proud Roman Empire.

The distinctive feature of these years of growth was the formulation of historic creeds and the production of apologetic and polemical writings. The canon of New Testament books was fixed practically as we have it today. This doctrinal interest and activity was brought about as a necessary defense and rebuttal against pagan philosophies and internal heresies which seriously threatened the faith bequeathed by the apostles. Therefore the brilliant abilities of men like Athanasius and Augustine were spent chiefly in the preservation of sound doctrine. This naturally placed great emphasis upon individualistic religion, making salvation largely a matter of what one believes. Hand in hand with this formulation of doctrine went the elaboration of church organization away from primitive simplicity to the fashion of the ideals of imperial Rome. This whole program had its values and its perils for the future.

Churchly State and Worldly Church.

With the accession of Constantine to full possession of the throne in 323, the influence of Rome became a decisive factor in church organization. Twelve centuries were to ensue during which the church assumed authority over men's minds and activities in religion, industry, politics, and social affairs. Religion became mostly a matter of magical ceremony to masses of people whose personal freedom was restricted and who were kept in ignorance and trained in superstition. Orthodoxy was fixed and maintained by elaborate ritual. Doctrine became a political issue. All these conditions were favorable to the development of a papacy claiming infallibility.

While this main line of church program was spending itself in organization and assertion of churchly authority, there were significant spiritual forces manifesting a very different spirit from that of worldly ambition. No external and formal emphasis can wholly crush the conviction and fervor of those who have felt the power of the indwelling Christ. Redeeming features for the period appear in occasional revivals of piety and learning, like those under Gregory I and Charlemagne, and the corrective tendencies of such protests against religious corruption as those of the Benedictine and Franciscan orders. The Crusades of the later Middle Ages brought great enlightenment to the people, and eventually men like Wyclif, Huss, and Savonarola came to be heralds of a better day. The missionary activities promoted by individual saints are important chiefly for their evangelization of barbaric peoples. "Christian missionaries laid the foundation for the alphabet, literature, agriculture, laws, and arts of the nations of Northern and Western Europe." The spread of Christian teaching carried with it a gradually-increasing sense of brotherhood among the nations. The period closed in

an intellectual and spiritual discontent which promised better things for the future.

Freedom of Conscience.

The movement of revolt against church authority inaugurated by Martin Luther in 1517 is traceable to several contributing causes. The Roman church insisted upon exalting institutions above individuals. Brave spirits had been examining the old order of religious affairs and were demanding reforms in the church. The constant strife between popes and rulers was a matter of shame to sensitive spirits. A revival of learning and adverse economic conditions wrought great discontent among the masses of people. They were therefore ready for a movement which promised relief for their condition.

"There are three fundamental principles of the Reformation: the supremacy of the Scripture over tradition, the supremacy of faith over works, and the supremacy of the Christian people over an exclusive priesthood" (Schaff). The Bible was substituted for the authority of the church and the individual conscience was granted the right of expression. It was true that even the leading spirits of the Reformation did not quickly depart from many features of their previous training, but the spirit of liberty was loosened and rapidly spread in all countries. Religious liberty gave impulse to every forward movement, and its effect is seen in the growth of republican governments since that time. Naturally the resulting religious emphasis was upon personal salvation, but the whole reformatory movement awakened social sympathies. These had a large part to play in the rise of denominations, which was an unavoidable phase of human liberty of conscience. Each denomination has something of value to contribute to the whole of Christianity, and we deal with the question fairly

only when we remember that their points of agreement are greater than those upon which they differ.

The Nineteenth Century.

It is safe to say that since 1800 Christianity has made more progress in really affecting the life of mankind than in all previous Christian history. This does not minimize in the least all the splendid work of Christian people in the past. Rather it is as it should be, after eighteen centuries of experience, that Christendom should be more sensible than ever of its evangelical responsibility. The church has learned that its power does not rest in elaborate organic machinery, and that mere acceptance of creeds is not Christian living. The nineteenth century has seen a mighty revival of study of the life of Christ and the apostolic age. Never has there been more earnest searching to know the mind and spirit of Christ, and the search is not unrewarded. Missionary activity has progressed like to the example of the first century. The open doors of the world have been entered on an unprecedented scale. We shall speak of other features of this period in future discussion.

Suggested Readings

Purves—"Christianity in the Apostolic Age."

Church History—Walker and Schaff.

Cross—"What Is Christianity?"

Zenos—"A Compendium of Church History."

A Guide to Lesson Discussion

1. What is the best evidence for the living vitality of the Christian religion?

2. What was the fundamental nature of the Christianity of the earliest disciples?

3. In what way has the spirit of Christian brotherhood been preserved in the church of today? Are there exceptions to it now?

4. Discuss what the apostolic Christians have to teach us on the questions of stewardship and benevolence.

5. What vital life activity stood at the center of the program of the Christians of the first century?

6. Trace the development of the democratic and universal spirit of Christian people in the apostolic age.

7. What natural factors gave rise to New Testament literature? Characterize the nature of the epistolary writings and of the Gospels.

8. What led to the formulation of doctrine in the age following the apostles? Was the whole energy of the church taken up by this?

9. Describe the leading program of the church from Constantine to the Reformation. By what was vital Christianity preserved?

10. What were the fundamental principles of the Reformation, and how did these change the life of the Christian church?

11. Compare the Christianity of the nineteenth century with that of the first.

Lesson V

The Present Challenge and Program of the Church

"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16: 18).

"I do not envy those who have to fight the battle of Christianity in the twentieth century; yes, perhaps I do, but it will be a stiff fight" (Marcus Dods).

Christianity and the Church.

The popular mind uses the terms **Christianity** and **church** interchangeably. This serves for practical purposes, but there is a difference to be recognized.

Christianity is the religion of Jesus Christ. We have difficulty in defining a spiritual reality. Perhaps the best we can say is that it is the religion which realizes the abundant life which Jesus came to cultivate (John 10: 10). It is manifested in the vitality and power of a living Spirit which unites God and men.

The church came into being as a means to achieve the ideals of Christ. Christianity is the power; the church is that power organized for service in the lives of those possessed by it. We use the word church with several meanings. At one time it represents all of organized Christendom; at another it is used of a denomination; and yet again reference is made to a local group of Christians. In this study the church is referred to as all Christian disciples organized to care for Christian life and do Christian work.

The specialty of the church is the religion of Jesus. Any group of persons professing to be representative of the Christian church "is loyal to the ideal of Jesus in so far as it makes much of warm and living re-

ligion, delights in communion with the Father, believes in divine redemption, is sustained by Christian faith and hope and love; in so far as it seeks the salvation of men at home and abroad in Jesus Christ; in so far as it is a free helper to free souls, a guardian of sound morals, a preacher of the eternal righteousness and love; in so far as it is a self-forgetful servant to mankind as it has opportunity" (Clarke).

Jesus' first mention of the church was on the occasion of a far-reaching vision of a great and permanent power for godliness (Matt. 16: 18). Peter was inspired to see in Christ the living Son of God. This type of personal spiritual character, which is capable of such inspiration, was the foundation of the church. On the same occasion Jesus gave voice to the fact that his church under human conditions would face a tremendous conflict with evil. The kingdom of Satan would not be overthrown without a struggle. However, there was no shadow of doubt in the Master's mind about the outcome. The church was to be impregnable and invincible because it was a carrier of Christianity. The combined forces of hell might assault it, but would retreat in confusion. The other side is an aggressive campaign to rout evil from its strongholds, which promises no less decisive a victory. The church is set for the defense of the truth and the propagation of it. It devolves upon the Christians of every age to discover the particular program by which they share in the triumphant progress of the church.

The Present Age.

While there is a hazard in attempting to analyze a period yet present, it is impossible to be in the midst of life and not be impressed by its main currents. It is important that we learn enough about the past to appreciate its values and lessons. We are permitted to contemplate the future and hope for better things to

come. But the fact remains that the time at hand is the period for our service and should command the devotion of our energies. It is well for every Christian to learn to sing, as his aspiration:

"To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill;
Oh, may it all my powers engage
To do my Master's will!"

It is not sufficient to say that our age is an age of sin. That is a lamentable characteristic of every human age. It is just as true that every age is fertile with possibilities for righteousness. There is need for redemption and provisions for redemption. Evil and good are constantly pitted against each other: the one desperately intent upon having conditions grow worse, the other fired with a determination that men shall be saved to their happiest destiny. Let us notice a few features of the present age which are particularly significant in giving purpose and direction to the modern church program.

This is a day of spiritual hunger. People have not been adequately fed upon food that satisfies the inner man. Multitudes went out to hear Jesus. Like unshepherded sheep they were suffering from starvation. The same lack of spiritual attention is indicated today by the masses who flock to the leadership of such as hold out some new hope of satisfaction to the longings of their deepest natures. Cases in point are the large followings after Christian Science and Spiritualism. The many deaths in recent years due to war and disease have caused millions of people to seek for new assurance of the future. Wealth, education, comforts, and culture are disappointing. Though many know not their trouble, they suffer from hunger of the soul.

This is an age of inquiry. It has been said, "The

characteristic symbol of this generation is the question mark." Scientific progress is probably the leading cause for this. Few things are taken for granted. The spirit of inquiry does not hesitate to interrogate concerning the source and authority of principles and institutions of long standing. The home, state, church, industry and social life are being examined as never before. It is sometimes held as fashionable to doubt that which has long been held sacred. This disposition has possibilities for both good and evil. It may lead to unwarrantable independence in matters of belief and practice, the colorlessness of negative living. It may be indicative of a genuine search after truth, and therefore a sign of growth and a promise of richer living. We must grant the right of intelligent people to inquire about the meaning of life, but the motive with which they do it needs to be positive and sincere.

This is an age of increasing knowledge. I am not saying that it is one of increasing **wisdom.** That may or may not be true. It is possible for knowledge to be increased faster than men have wisdom to know what to do with it. Never was there such dissemination of facts regarding the universe as at the present time. Discovery and invention go on apace. Huge sums of money are expended upon private and public schools. Institutions of higher learning are having unprecedented attendance. All kinds of industry and social conditions are being revolutionized. When Paul made his impassioned appeal for Christian truth before Agrippa and Festus, the latter feared that much learning had driven Paul to madness (Acts 26: 24). It is a present danger that without spiritual control many people with great learning will be led to live in ways that are little short of madness.

This is an age of social interest. "Ours is the day of the social question." It is a natural reaction from

the individualistic emphasis of former centuries. Problems of industry, education, religion, and morals are being studied for their social significance. This is a leading feature in what we call democracy. Each member of society is conceived to have a rightful share in all its activities, but to do so he must be socially serviceable. At the bottom of this social interest is an idealistic impulse which must be respected. It bespeaks a new vision of what society may be when founded on unselfish principles. We commend every search for the ways by which men can live together in peace and to their mutual advantage. The day is to be welcomed when the idle, whether rich or poor, is compelled to apologize for his existence.

This is an age of unparalleled unrest. This condition is apparent to the most superficial observer. It is contributed to by each of the factors previously mentioned. Economic disturbances lead in alarming fashion to violence and bloodshed. Political revolutions are adding intensified uneasiness to "the head that wears a crown." Social upheavals threaten the existence of institutions inherited from antiquity. Religious movements are stirring the camps of orthodoxy and compelling a reëxamination of the foundations of faith. However, human unrest is no new thing. Every age has more or less of it, according as the need arises for adjustment to new conditions. The consciousness of social inequalities occasioned by democratic progress, the stupendous increase in human knowledge, and the unheard-of accumulation of material wealth, all serve to move the whole world together as has never happened before. There is bound to be unrest as long as men and women learn that life is not all it should be. The growth of living things requires a state of unrest. When human society is ignorant and exploited by aristocratic dominance, murmurings of discontent are not so audible,

because they are restrained. Allow those same people to have their intelligence quickened and give them a taste of freedom, and a revolution is at hand.

The Challenge to the Church.

The essence of the challenge to the church in any period is to show what Christianity is able to do with conditions as they exist. Sometimes it seems that the forces of evil are more vigorous than at other times, but the truth is that their power is dependent upon their opportunities to operate. In this respect our modern age is perilous because of its possibilities for evil. But the same possibilities may be turned into opportunities for good. The church never had such world-wide opportunity to prevail against sin. She is challenged to produce "the bread of life" for the souls which hunger without access to the sources of supply. It is her privilege to meet the inquiring mind of the age fearlessly and answer the deepest questions of life in terms of spirit. Upon her devolves the obligation to show the relation of religious truth to all truth discovered by advancing science. She has the gospel of brotherhood which makes for real democracy and the power which is able to control social impulses for the greatest welfare. She is commissioned to turn the mind of the age toward God by way of a redeeming Savior whose mastery over human hearts means good-will among men in a spiritual kingdom which is free from the discords and disturbances of inequality, distracting doubt, and overshadowing fears.

The Program of the Church.

Christian work proceeds along two main lines of emphasis. One of these is the **conservation** of the treasures which constitute the natural heritage of the church. These factors of faith and power and privilege, imparted by Christ and bequeathed through the lives of genera-

tions of saintly characters, must be preserved by a constructive policy of worship and service. The spirituality of the church must be maintained and deepened if she would accomplish her mission. Religious ideals and motives must be made more and more compelling. A significant part of this conserving work is to save the children of the church to a place in its membership and a share in its work.

A second aspect of Christian work is the **reclamation** of lives that have never been touched by, or have never made a full surrender to, the mastery of Jesus Christ. Without doubt the church has sometimes given ground which she should have kept. Many lives are in ignorance of a redeeming Gospel. The church must make a genuine effort to restore such as these. She has a position of leadership to assume in making Christian principles operative and effective in lives and affairs of human interest from which they have too long been sadly lacking.

In harmony with the characteristic demands of the age, as previously pointed out, and in carrying out the constructive and reconstructive lines of Christian work, several specific features of the modern church program may be mentioned:

1. **The cultivation of spiritual life.** Above all else the church is an agent of religion, and religion is a matter of the Spirit. There is always danger that an institution may lose its soul, and the church as an organization has not always been free from this peril. The church must use vigilance to keep itself converted to Christ. For this reason a definite program of worship is necessary. She must practice devotion and teach it if she would speak with prophetic power regarding God's righteousness and judgment. When the church humbles herself before the Lord she is exalted in character and service.

2. **The evangelization of the world.** No argument is needed to impress the missionary responsibility of the Christian church. Her first obligation is to make Christ known until every land shall ring with praises of him. The unchurched masses at home and the unevangelized abroad must be challenged by a message which has power to convert their wills and capture their allegiance.

3. **The promotion of Christian education.** It is only by a program of education with religion at the center that the popular wave of materialism in modern life may be checked. The heart must be trained simultaneously with the hand and mind. Spiritual values must have their proper emphasis, and truth needs to be spoken in a living language that is understood by living men.

4. **The teaching of Christian ethics.** This is best to be done by way of living example. Morality is a way of life, and every religious and social problem has an ethical nature. As the teacher of Christian religion, the Christian church is called upon to live the way that Jesus did. Christian ethic means "living according to Christianity." The church is the teacher of true motives and ideals for human conduct.

5. **The social application of Christianity.** The church is itself a social institution and must find its own salvation wrapped up in its associations. No individual is considered fairly apart from the society of which he is a part. The world at large is looking to the church to show how Christianity functions in social relationships.

Each of these features of the program of the church will be made the subject of following lessons.

The scope of this comprehensive program of Christian activity will at once be seen as unlimited. Its first contact is made with the individual life to be regenerated by faith in Jesus Christ. The effect of personal Chris-

tian influence makes itself felt in the immediate community, bringing religion helpfully close to the lives of people there. The church ought to be the center of influence in a community because it furnishes motive and power which makes human living worth while. From the local congregation the scope of the program expands to the work of a national organization, representing a denomination, or group of coöperating denominations. Eventually the work of the church assumes world-wide proportions in carrying the Gospel to all nations, with a vision of a happy day when world brotherhood will be established on the basis of Christian principles.

Suggested Readings

Clarke—"The Ideal of Jesus," Ch. XIII, XIV.
Eddy—"Facing the Crisis."
Tittle—"What Must the Church Do to Be Saved?"
Brown—"The Church in America."
Fosdick—"The Meaning of Service."

A Guide to Lesson Discussion

1. Distinguish between the church and Christianity.

2. State in your own words what Jesus had in mind when he first spoke about the establishment of the church.

3. What evidences do you find in your community to support the statements that the present generation is spiritually-hungry? of questioning disposition? of social interest? in a state of unrest?

4. Are there indications to the contrary? What other characteristics of the age would you give than those mentioned?

5. Discuss the influence of increasing knowledge upon the general spirit of the age.

6. State in concrete fashion the challenge which the present age offers to the Christian church.

7. Along what two lines does the work of the church continually proceed?

8. Name the elements of the church program found in the lesson. Are these all-inclusive? What others would you add?

9. Discuss the expanding scope of Christian work in our day.

10. What elements of life today are particularly challenging to the Church of the Brethren? By what sort of program shall she meet them?

Lesson VI

The Christian Program of Spiritual Culture

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself" (Luke 10: 27).

"We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial;
We should count time by heart's throbs. He most lives
Who **thinks** most, **feels** the noblest, **acts** the best" (Philip J. Bailey).

Christian Responsibility for Spiritual Culture.

Our generation is enthusiastic about getting work done. This is a commendable disposition, but it is subject to the danger of not taking sufficient thought for the reasons why work should be done. Enthusiasm and efficiency may proceed to the neglect of cultivation of character. This omission has a fatal effect upon religious work. It results in a shallowness of spiritual life, which explains the measure of failure to be found in the service of the Christian church. It is essential that Christian people take time to drink from the springs of spiritual power to become fitted for the work of the Lord. Paul interpreted the Christian life in terms of a tremendous conflict in which it is necessary to have on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6: 13-18). His figure is in harmony with the words of Jesus—about the struggle with the powers of evil in which his church is a victorious participant (Matt. 16: 18). Our emphasis here is to the effect that Christians need to see to it that their own spiritual equipment is intact. The church must look to her own spiritual culture.

The function of pure religion is to keep people con-

scious that they are living in the presence of God all the time. Christianity has a clear portrayal of the character of God, and an example of how to live before him, in the teachings and life of Jesus. Our Lord as a Man took his place among men as a worshiper. His disciples have learned his lesson when they have cultivated a worshipful attitude which brings thought, feeling, and will into harmony with the divine will. "Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3: 17). This relation of worship to the ordinary duties of life is beautifully illustrated in the familiar painting called **The Angelus.** A village with towering church spire forms the background. In the foreground two peasants are toiling in the field. The hour of evening prayer has come and, at a signal from the church bell, the workers stand with bowed heads in recognition of divine presence and goodness. So should Christians always be attuned to worship.

The central feature of worship is **prayer.** Paul made it all-important to the serviceableness of the Christian armor. Jesus regarded prayer as a necessity for human living, the channel of divine strength and wisdom, founded on abiding faith, and to be engaged in persistently and unselfishly. He cannot love God with mind, heart, soul, and strength who has not learned to pray. It is an exercise which calls for the energy of the whole person in thought, reverence, surrender, and praise in word and deed. Through it comes **vision** and **power.** Mr. John R. Mott has recently defined vision as the capacity "to see what others do not see, to see further than they see, and to see before they see." Certainly Christians have no message unless they keep themselves keenly aware of the facts of their own lives, the facts of Christ's life, and the facts concerning the world in which they live. Spiritual culture is an imperative

obligation upon the disciples of Christ in order that they be influential in his behalf. When the church has learned how to keep building herself up in the faith and maintaining her place in the love of God, she will readily discover the way by which to teach her truth to others. Her own example will be the authority for her teaching. The Christian world can never afford to lose the attitude of the psalmist when he prayed:

> "Show me thy ways, O Jehovah; teach me thy paths.
> Guide me in thy truth and teach me;
> For thou art the God of my salvation;
> For thee do I wait all the day" (Psa. 25: 4, 5).

Two Aspects of Spiritual Culture.

The first is that of the **individual person.** Emerson said: "God enters by a private door into every individual." Religion is first of all a matter of seeing that this individual door is open for the life of God to dwell within the human heart in fulness. Christianity's first teachings have to do with personal relationships to God and man. It is therefore the duty of each person to look well to his own spiritual welfare, that it is vigorous and growing. This personal responsibility is well illustrated by the words of the Quaker brother in suggesting how the meetinghouse might be cleaned: "If each one of thee will sweep well about thy own pew, the house will be clean in a short time." So the spiritual health of all of Christendom is dependent upon the faithfulness of its many members in their respective individual lives.

The second aspect of spiritual culture is **social.** This might also be called the **organized** or **institutional** cultivation of the life of the spirit. Many of the characteristics of individuals are the outgrowth of social conditions about them. Spiritual health is helped or hindered by surrounding environment and activity. These social conditions can be utilized as channels through

which the power of God can act to save individuals. Many people can testify that their first inspirations after the Christian life came to them through the influence of a group of worshipers witnessing unitedly to the blessings of grace. This is a fact which accounts for many conversions in revival meetings. Christians have a message for each other, and then severally and collectively for others. It was out of a recognition of the uniting bond of common faith and love that Paul prayed in behalf of mutual praise, "that with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Faither of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15: 5). It is in this aspect that the church functions as a powerful agent to promote Christian growth by fusing the contributed spiritual energy of its membership into effective worship and teaching.

The Promotion of Spiritual Culture.

It is our object in the present section to mention a list of agencies which lend themselves in a practical manner to both the individual and the church for the practice and teaching of spiritual living. These are such means as are available and acceptable to all Christians, regardless of denomination. They have been tried and found of worth in the experience of the past and are commended to the intelligent Christian judgment of the present. No one element of spiritual culture is an end in itself. In fact, the value of all taken together depends upon the right use of them as agencies to promote spiritual growth "till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4: 13).

1. **The Bible.** The Christian Scriptures are easily the greatest religious Book in the world. They furnish a history of the life of God in humanity that yields inspiration for the living experience of men. It is our

one source of knowledge concerning the historic Christ, and is therefore a priceless heritage of the Christian church. It is not only her privilege to study it, but as well her duty to be possessed by its spirit. The church is under grateful obligation to promote a universal knowledge of the Bible, intellectually and devotionally. The work of the American Bible Society may be cited as a type of promotion that is commendable. Its presses are turning off copies of the Gospels at the rate of ten thousand an hour. An order has recently been placed with a New York firm for one million, five hundred thousand portions of Scripture, to be sold at one cent each. The Bible in whole or in part has been translated into seven hundred and seventy languages or dialects. During the last decade the Bible has appeared in a new language on an average of every six weeks. For over four centuries the Bible has never been off the press. This good work will increase to even more gigantic proportions as the Christian church deepens its acquaintance with the treasure in its keeping.

2. **Private devotion.** The mere mention of this Christian duty suggests its importance. The practice of Jesus and the saints in all ages testifies to its value. He who prays in secret will be rewarded openly with poise and assurance for the duties of life. An urgent responsibility rests upon pastors to teach their people more perfectly the practice of observing a quiet period every day.

3. **The family altar.** The home is the place from which Christian ideals should pass from individuals of one generation to another. The church has been made to bear a double burden of spiritual culture because family life has not done its share in promoting religion. Family altars have fallen down while professing Christians have pleaded the lack of time, the absence of knowledge how to conduct worship in the home, and

some fail to appreciate its significance. It is urgent that these altars be reconstructed for the sake of the unifying and deepening of family life and the cultivation of worshipful spirits. The conduct of prayers in the home must not be merely formal, but related to life. Mention may be made of the Family Altar League, composed of people who have covenanted to maintain a family altar in their homes. It is estimated that in the last five years seventy-five thousand new family altars have been established. Such a movement is bound to have its effect on the spiritual life of the church.

4. **Public worship.** The public assembly is a natural outcome of common religious faith, from the days of the earliest worshipers to modern times. Whether the Druids in the forest, the Jews in their synagogues, or Christians in their churches, the practice of gathering together for worship is highly profitable to spiritual culture. That public worship is promotive of personal piety is proved by the fact that the most devout are eager to assemble regularly. The social value of attendance upon public worship is very great. John Wesley said there is no such thing as solitary religion. People are social creatures, and no motive on earth is so productive of good in their gathering together as the religious purpose of worshiping. Pentecostal Christians had power for witness and a wholesome influence upon the people because they gave a sincere demonstration of brotherly spirit. The world needs to be impressed that, "Like a mighty army, moves the church of God."

Roosevelt spoke an influential word for church-going when he said: "I know that one can worship the Creator in a grove of trees, or by a running brook, or in a man's own house, just as well as in a church. But I also know as a matter of cold fact that the average man does not thus worship. . . . At church he will hear a ser-

mon by a good man who, with his good wife, is engaged all the week in making hard lives a little easier. He will listen to and take part in Bible reading. He will take part in singing some good hymns. He will come away feeling a little more charitably toward all the world. . . ."

The conduct of public worship is a vital factor in the church program. These services, however, demand the most careful planning in order to serve the purposes of cultivating sensitive consciences, stirring up a sense of need of God, and inspiring people to Christlike living. Unless coming together means these things, its value is doubtful. It has been amply demonstrated that people will come to church if they receive spiritual help there. Much effort is expended to get folks to attend church which ought to be used in getting something worth while for them to come to. A shrewd farmer, after reading a program of a church convention, remarked: "I see most of the time was spent in discussing how to get folks to come to church. I never attended a farmers' convention where we discussed how to get cattle to come to the trough. We spend the time discussing the best kind of feed." The lesson is obvious. Aim, organization, preparation are needed to make our public worship periods more effective in spiritual culture.

5. **Special conferences.** By these are meant the meetings designed for particular groups, with common responsibilities for certain phases of religious activities. Ministers' meetings, missionary and Sunday-school conventions, parents' meetings, and the like are well known. Especially noteworthy are those conferences which give point to the life-work aspirations of the young people of the church. These are bound to react powerfully upon the future work of the kingdom.

6. **Religious symbols.** The church has through the

centuries preserved certain ordinances which are aimed to assist in a deeper appreciation of the truths of the Christian religion. These symbols of love and fellowship and service are means of spiritual growth administered at the hands of the church. More care may well be taken that these emblematic exercises which call our minds from worldliness, deepen our penitence, quicken our love, intensify our consecration, and identify us with the whole fellowship of disciples, are made conducive to greater spiritual benefit.

7. **The Lord's Day.** Jesus derived the authority for one day of rest in seven from the consideration of human benefit. He exalted human need above the formality of an institution. World-wide experience of men is witness to the beneficent influence of a day in which ordinary tasks are laid aside. The divine will for that day to be devoted in a special way to religious uses is clearly seen in the need of man for spiritual cultivation apart from material interests with which so much of human life is occupied. The church is charged with directing her people in the spiritual uses of the Lord's Day.

8. **Wholesome literature.** "Reading maketh a perfect man," wrote a wise man. But it must be added that it takes good reading to move a man in the direction of spiritual perfection. Christian people are responsible for more activity than they assume in directing the minds of young and old readers toward wholesome materials. There was never such wealth of helpful religious literature as is now available. The church should insist upon the press maintaining the potent place as a moral influence which it is capable of doing.

9. **Good music.** Sweet concord of sounds has power to affect character by stirring emotions, awakening ideas, soothing troubled nerves and spirits, and transforming hearts into goodness. More attention should be paid

to good music in our homes and churches. Christian ideas become inspiring messages in hymns and tunes.

10. **Art.** Pictures make lasting imprints upon the soul. Good reprints of great paintings are within the reach of all. Here is another phase of the church's spiritual ministry in soul culture.

"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, take account of these things" (Philpp. 4: 8).

Suggested Readings

Jones—"The Inner Life."
Fosdick—"The Meaning of Prayer."
Hartshorne—"Manual of Training in Worship."
Cope—"Religious Education in the Church."

A Guide to Lesson Discussion

1. Discuss the necessity for spiritual culture and the primary elements of which it consists.

2. What is meant by the individual aspect of spiritual culture?

3. What do we mean by the social aspect of spiritual culture?

4. Make a list of the opportunities for extension of the Bible in your neighborhood.

5. What do you know of family altars in your community? Is it impossible for there to be more? What is needed?

6. Name the specific respects in which worship in your public services may be improved.

7. What special meetings for spiritual culture are held in your vicinity? State the value they have.

8. Of what use is the Christian's Lord's Day? What is the difference in its observance among members of the church as you know it and others?

9. Speak of literature, art, and music as factors of spiritual culture. What place are they given in your congregation?

10. Name other agencies for spiritual growth than those given.

Lesson VII

The Program of Christian Evangelism

"As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world" (John 17: 18).

"If our religion is false, we ought to change it; if it is true, we ought to propagate it" (Archbishop Whately).

What Is Christian Evangelism?

Our simplest understanding of evangelism is the winning of men and women to Jesus Christ. The evangel of salvation was first announced by the angel-evangelists to the shepherds on the Bethlehem hills when Jesus was born (Luke 2: 9-12). Their glad task has been transmitted to every one who has received the Gospel, and in this way it is the divine will that the claims of Christ shall be pressed upon every soul in the world. The popular conception of the nature of evangelism is that it is preaching. This is always a vital phase of it. The early church was warm with fervor in making known the beauty of their new faith. They felt the urgency of their task of witnessing in view of a belief in the early return of the Lord. The work appealed to them as an emergency measure, and in reality so it is, because souls are precious. The church has always felt some measure of responsibility toward the unevangelized.

With the passing of the centuries, however, the meaning of evangelism has expanded. Today it is generally accepted as being not only the work of bringing the Gospel into contact with the unsaved, but also the more permanent task of making that contact continuously effective. Evangelism is not only bringing people into Christ; it furnishes means and inspiration by which men

may grow in Christ. To the preaching of the Gospel is added the program of establishing the Gospel by moral and religious environment and teaching. Evangelism is, therefore, the whole process of observing the divine laws for the spiritual education of men according to the Gospel of the living Christ. It involves the use of all means that are valuable to a clear understanding of Christ.

This process is not the work of a moment, but a permanent effort which is bequeathed by one generation to the next, and indeed is new with each succeeding generation. Conversion is a definite step in it, but not the whole. The true evangelist is not satisfied merely to have a confession of Christ; he seeks to have the convert assume definite responsibility as a disciple of Christ. This task calls for a recognition of God's will for every individual, and a consecration to serve that will. No spirituality and good judgment are too deep and broad for the important evangelistic task of challenging the world for Christ.

The Obligation for Evangelism.

The Student Volunteer Movement has been initiated and promoted under the profound conviction that "Our Lord Jesus Christ has laid upon his church as a primary duty the preaching of the Gospel to all nations." All Christians accept this fundamental statement. It gives us cause to examine the leading incentives which underlie Christian evangelism.

First, **the commission of Christ.** The most familiar statement of this is in Matt. 28: 19, 20. It is worthy of special attention, so let us consider it by a study of the prominent words or statements as they stand in the original Greek language:

"All authority" is back of the evangelistic enterprise. It is not of human conception, but of divine origin.

The united power of heaven and earth is in the background and is accessible to every Christian. No other business on earth is vested with such strength and purpose.

"Having gone" is the original of what is translated "Go." We often think of it as the most important statement of the passage, but it is really incidental, a form of antecedent action to the main charge. Jesus took **going** for granted. In their confession of him the disciples assumed the attitude of wanting to be where the Lord wished it. Their hearts and wills had already gone into the needy fields; the physical act of getting there is simply following the surrendered life.

"Disciple all the nations" is the imperative statement of the commission and expresses the chief thought in the mind of Jesus. It is the task of winning men for which he had called them from their fishing and other vocations. This is the core of evangelism—whatever it takes to make men disciples of Jesus.

"Baptizing" is the symbolic seal of conversion, an open declaration that a life is committed to Christ. This rite is the universal sign of membership in the Christian body.

"Teaching" the deliverances of Christ is a process of furnishing food for the growing Christian. Here is the authority for educational evangelism, the promotion of Christianity by instruction.

This urgent charge for Christian evangelism is blest with the assurance of the permanent presence and power of the living Lord. Our responsibility as the successors of the earliest disciples is definite and strong for the work of winning men to Christ and building them up in him.

Second, **the experience of the church.** It is of value

for us to know that the early Christians were wonderfully blest by their obedience to the evangelistic program which the Lord laid upon them. They proved what Paul asserted the Gospel to be, "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1: 16). The Christian church has ever been spiritual and powerful in proportion to her evangelistic zeal.

Third, **a knowledge of the unconverted world.** Jesus taught the disciples to look upon humanity as a field for harvest. This sort of information is fuel for missionary fervor. It is assumed that we have a real experience with Christianity and know how to value it. To know that others lack its comfort and power is a mighty incentive for action. The editor of a prominent manufacturers' magazine recently said: "The supreme need in the world today is a revival of genuine spiritual religion." We believe Christianity is that religion. It furnishes the social dynamic of saved individuals which can cure the world's ills. Missionary facts at hand today reveal a startling need.

Fourth, **Christlike sympathy.** Any Christian who has caught a vision of the value of a human soul cannot tarry with the message of salvation. Christlike sympathy is an overwhelming inner incentive to promote Christian truth among those who sit in ignorance or indifference. They who have learned the compassion of Jesus for men and women and children whose opportunity to know the true God are limited will be stirred into earnest endeavor to fulfill the charge of the poet:

"O Zion haste, thy mission high fulfilling,
To tell to all the world that God is Light;
That he who made all nations is not willing
One soul should perish, lost in shades of night."

Types of Evangelistic Endeavor.

Of these we may mention four:

1. **Personal.** It is an unfortunate fact that the great body of Christian people have never felt responsible for personal effort in soul winning. This may account for much of the church's weakness. Its members have been too willing to let the ministry bear the burden of evangelism. Their attitude is wrong. The person of each disciple is an agent for the transmission of God's Word and Spirit. Personal evangelism is an incarnation of the message. The life back of the appeal gives it power, and the private word is often more effective than the public sermon. Besides, sermons will never reach all who can be reached by the individual evangelist.

2. **Pastoral.** No one doubts the evangelistic calling of the Christian minister. It is probably in large measure the fault of the ministry that the body of members have not felt their responsibility. It is a pastor's chief business to make soul winners of his flock. The need of the hour is not for professional evangelists, but for the laity of the church to be energized to win men. Some one asked Lyman Beecher why he was so successful. He replied, "I preach on Sunday, but I have 450 members who take my message and on Monday preach it wherever they go." During a forty years' ministry in London Spurgeon averaged one convert for every day. A successful pastor is his own evangelist.

3. **Educational.** We have already noticed that the teaching function has an important place in the Great Commission. The work of Christian education will be emphasized in the following chapter. It is sufficient here to say that in modern times educational evangelism is largely supplanting the need for the old-fashioned revival meetings. It is of greater value in holding children for the church, in the indoctrination of converts, and the intelligent activity of the church as a whole.

4. **Institutional.** By this we mean the strengthening of such institutions as lend themselves readily to Christian influence. First of all is the home, the fountainhead for religious training. Then the church as an active organization and the home of the evangelistic message. To these may be added any other community institutions which may be living exponents to the power of Christian truth, and therefore centers of evangelism.

The Home Field.

"The light that shines farthest shines brightest closer home." Evangelism, like charity, begins at home, but it does not end there. The early Christians were to bear their witness outward from Jerusalem. For us this means beginning just where we are and extending our efforts wherever we go. No argument is needed to prove that our nominally-Christian land is a field of evangelism, but some may not feel keenly that our own country furnishes opportunity for just as real missionary work as may be done abroad.

It is difficult, though, to see how any could doubt this after the startling awakening of the great war. Many once-complacent congregations and denominations have been stirred to face some important, if unfortunate, facts. A feeling is widespread that the Christian church in lands usually called Christian did not do its full duty to prevent the war. We cannot deny some justice to the accusation. At the same time there is no other institution than the church which can supply the vital spiritual force necessary for reconstruction.

Let us note a few facts which stir us to a sense of need for home evangelism—facts common to both rural and urban life:

1. **Unchurched masses.** Surveys of recent years are proving that many communities once thought well covered by Christian activities contain many people outside the direct influence of the Gospel. Some were once

with religious connection, but are disinterested. Others, because of unfortunate circumstances of birth and environment, have never had touch with the church and are prejudiced against it. The alienation of labor classes from the church is well known. We have taken too much for granted as Christian individuals and congregations.

2. **Isolated fields.** Our church-extension activities have not kept pace with economic developments. There are lumber camps in the North and West, mining camps in both East and West, groups of agricultural pioneers in the long stretches of western prairies, and thousands of settlements in the eastern and southern mountains, which are served with a minimum of spiritual ministry, if not entirely destitute of it. Certainly these things ought not to be so in our fair land.

3. **Foreign people in our midst.** Sections of our cities are almost wholly populated by people from Asia and Europe. Some rural communities are dominated by such. The race problem is brought to the front for first-hand contact. Our process of Americanization should be primarily one of Christianization.

4. **Competing religions.** Buddhists, Moslems, and other Asiatic systems of religion have invaded our shores. Still other types of cults and teachings subversive of the Gospel have sprung up in our midst, not the least of which are Mormonism, Christian Science, and various forms of spiritualism. The redemptive Gospel is the only antidote.

5. **The children of the church.** No statistics are needed to show that the church has not nearly kept her own children. A survey in any community will find an unfortunate proportion of the families of Christian parents inactive in the work of the church. Some denominations have done better than others. No earnest member of the Church of the Brethren can fail to regret

the great loss which it has suffered of boys and girls who should have become leaders in the Fraternity.

Such facts as these constitute a sharp challenge to the church in America to make our land more Christian than it is. The renewed interest which is being taken in the evangelization of the homeland is a heartening indication of future progress. A few essential factors in the promotion of this program may be mentioned:

a. **Every Christian a missionary,** feeling responsible for living and talking like a disciple, using his influence for the Master.

b. **Every home hallowed by Christian spirits.** Until this is true we strive in vain to guide the feet of the young in the ways of the Lord.

c. **Every congregation alert to its responsibility for the community.** An organized church stands for service. It should function as the center of morality and religion in its neighborhood. The church should cultivate its people in neighborly spirit, and see to it that none in its territory lack direct witness to and appeal for the claims of Christ.

d. **Denominational coöperation.** The days of battle between denominations are passing. Without compromise of convictions it is possible for church peoples to rid themselves of bias toward each other and find ways of coöperation in the great task of evangelism. There is a share for each denomination. A deep sense of unity in possession of Christian truth pervades the large bodies of Christians, and by their coöperative efforts the field will be better and more wisely occupied for Christ. The efforts to effect such coöperation by organizations like the Federal Council of Churches in America are commendable. Competition among denominations within limited fields has resulted in overchurching, revealing a lamentable waste of money and efficiency. We believe the Spirit of Christ has yet to

bring much spiritual fruitage in America out of the united efforts of Christian people.

The Foreign Task.

No reverent student of Scripture can read such texts as Matt. 28: 19, 20; Mark 16: 15; Luke 24: 47; John 17: 18; Acts 1: 8 without a thrill of missionary responsibility. "All nations," "the whole creation," "the world," "the uttermost parts of the earth," allow no room for a mere nationalistic interpretation of the task of the church. "A narrow vision makes a narrow man; a vast vision makes a vast man." Christianity is a universal religion and all mankind has claims upon it. The world now lies as a field ready unto harvest. Many parts of it are as yet untouched and a knowledge of the need is a call to the task.

Facts regarding the foreign fields are procurable in the literature issued by religious publishing houses and missionary societies. Let us interest ourselves with some statements of the leading phases of the foreign program:

1. **The direct presentation of the Gospel.** Every missionary ought to be able to give voice to the redemptive message. It is inspiring to learn the experience of evangelists who go into the villages of heathendom and for the first time tell the story of salvation. This work opens the way for attention and interest and faith. It was Jesus' way.

2. **The establishment of Christian institutions.** By this means the effects of preaching are made permanent. Heathen environment is changed by Christian homes, schools, hospitals, literature, and training in Christian methods of industry and social life.

3. **Development of the native churches.** The primary task of the foreign missionary is to plant the truths of the Gospel in the fertile soil of heathen hearts

and then cultivate the growth of faith in ways that are adapted to the civilization of which the converts are a part. It is altogether likely that missionaries have been zealous in transplanting Western civilization to oriental countries faster than it could be assimilated. Christianity early showed its power to live by transplantation. Read its record of progress from Jerusalem to Antioch, to Ephesus, to Corinth, Alexandria, and Rome. Today a Chinese church is rising in China which is to be heard from in the future. Since 1900 the number of Christians in China has increased fourfold. A National Council of Churches in India has been organized. It is in these indigenous movements that the future church in foreign lands is assured. And it is entirely likely that the church at home can learn some valuable lessons from them. May we ever be open to receive new lessons regarding the power of Christianity to propagate itself.

It has been demonstrated beyond question that an interest in foreign missions is indispensable to the health and growth of the home church. Knowledge of the triumphs of the Gospel abroad makes us appreciate it more close at hand. This reflex inspiration serves to re-energize workers at home. It is the reward of spiritual giving.

Another fact of great significance in a world struggling to find a basis for understanding and peace, is that Christian missions are a potent factor in the solution of international problems. All nations are facing the same problems. Christianity alone offers the love of humanity which is sufficient as a foundation for goodwill among men.

"His lamps are we.
To shine where he shall say.
And lamps are not for sunny rooms,
Nor for the light of day;
But for dark places of the earth

Where shame and wrong and crime have birth,
And for the murky twilight gray
Where wandering sheep have gone astray
And where the lamp of faith grows dim
And souls are groping after him.
And as sometimes a flame we see
Clear shining—through the night
We cannot see the lamp—
But only see the light,
So may we shine, his love the flame,
That men may glorify his name" (Annie Johnson Flint).

Suggestions for Reading

Joseph—"Essentials of Evangelism."

Goodell—"Pastoral and Personal Evangelism."

Stover—"Missions, The Great First-Work of the Church."

Literature on Missions and Evangelism, Brethren Publishing House.

A Guide to Lesson Discussion

1. Explain the development of the meaning of evangelism to its present expanded conception.

2. Discuss the four incentives to evangelism traced in the text. What others would you add?

3. Explain the nature of personal evangelism. What are some of its difficulties? What are its blessings?

4. Describe some leading qualities of an evangelistic pastor.

5. How may Christian evangelism be promoted by institutions?

6. Apply the discussion of the need for home evangelism to your own community. Do you find opportunity for further effort there?

7. How shall we know when America is completely evangelized?

8. What possibilities for further coöperation of Christian forces do you find in your neighborhood?

9. Along what lines must foreign mission work proceed to insure the Christianization of future generations in lands now heathen?

10. Of what value to your local church is its information about, and participation in, foreign mission work? In what way may this effect be improved?

Lesson VIII

The Program of Christian Education

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8: 32).

"Only as the modern church becomes a teaching institution, making the religious nurture and training of its youth its first care and obligation, standing out above all other interests and enterprises whatever, will it be able to take its place as a regenerative agency in society" (Professor G. H. Betts).

The Christian Meaning of Education.

Education is the process of enlightening and developing the natural powers with which human life is endowed. The present age is witnessing an unprecedented interest in this process. Every great nation is promoting a system of education as essential to its very life. The best minds of civilization are devoted to this cause, along with unnumbered millions of dollars. There is a growing realization of education as a social force. The recent example of Germany in cultivating militarism is a powerful teaching and warning of what can happen to a nation because of what is taught to its youth. Unless schools teach that which is pure, people will not be inspired to do what is right. There is an increasing tendency to define education in terms of character training. President King has expressed this in admirable words: "Education does not consist of things, not even of books, but of association with the wise and noble and good."

We have not far to seek for the affinity of the Christian religion with the process of education. The whole career of Christ was a superb demonstration of teaching, of which his vicarious death was the supreme lesson

in enforcing divine love. Those whom he taught were originally called "learners." They were trained to be the teachers of religion to their generation, and so has Christianity progressed throughout the ages in proportion to the faithfulness of each generation to its responsibility for the teaching of truth. To all previous ideas of education Christianity has added to the body of truth to be taught and indicated the proper attitude toward God, men, and the world, which insures a growing and godly character. Christian education is simply thinking of education in terms of the development of Christian character.

With the separation of church and state in modern times there has come about a division of labor in the various phases of full education. The state has proceeded to teach the essentials of citizenship and provided for instruction in general knowledge, leaving it to the church to promote the spiritual life of society by religious education. The church has not always been faithful to this responsibility. She has sometimes been inclined to think that religious life would continue by natural inheritance—a fact which has been emphatically disproved by experience. The present thought regarding the importance of religious education has been well summarized in recent words of President Harding: "The future of our nation cannot be trusted to our children unless their education includes their spiritual development."

Let us make no mistake of a sharp antithesis between what is called general and religious education. The difference lies in specific aim and motive rather than in method. All education aims to translate natural ability into human service. Christian education aims to make this service the essential product of Christian character. It seeks to bring about the finest kind of relation between religion and life. This is assuredly the only ef-

fective antidote to the irreligious tendencies we deplore. In proportion as we believe Christian ideals are the highest in the world do we seek to bring the process of education under their power and influence.

Aims in Christian Education.

It is sometimes said that education is training to make a **living.** Christian thought would amend that to say that education is to make a **life.** Its goal should be to raise a life to its highest power in character. That is according to Jesus' principle of first things first (Matt. 6: 33). Let two eminent leaders in Christian education state the case: "The ultimate aim of religious education is Christian life and character finding adequate expression in all of life's relationships" (Dr. Stout). "The object of religious education is not to fill the brain, but to light a torch" (Dr. Vaughn). Among the specific phases of this aim we may notice the following:

1. **Moulding decisions for Christ.** This is of particular application to the recruiting of membership for the church from the ranks of children and youth. The teaching of truth prepares for a natural and logical and voluntary decision for Christ. The history of the church shows that its major leadership has come from those who were religiously instructed from their infancy.

2. **Developing Christian life.** An intelligent membership adds power to the church. Spiritual culture flourishes in the soil of understanding of the nature of religion, its origin and history. Teaching after conversion is a definite phase of the responsibility placed upon Christians by the Great Commission. No disciple ever ceases to be a learner of the theory and practice of Christian faith.

3. **Opening avenues for Christian service.** True education provides instruction regarding the nature of human personality and enables people to understand

themselves better. It also brings to attention the conditions and needs of the world, and reveals opportunities for social usefulness. Many people fail to see much of the beauty of life because they were not trained to see the finer human side of things with sympathetic eyes like those of Christ.

4. **Interpreting Christian ideals to the world.** It is the duty of Christianity to set a clear interpretation of itself before the world. It is true that spiritual things are spiritually discerned, but that which is spiritual harmonizes with laws and endowments in which all persons have power to participate. Christian living is the only way by which the world will learn the value of Christian teaching for the religious nature of mankind. Such living is educational in itself.

5. **Producing Christian leadership.** There is always a need in the church for minds which are able to think through the problems of applying Christianity in every age. There must be leaders who are able to see both within and without the church and take the initiative in aggressive action. A survey of the permanently effective leadership of the church will show that it is largely composed of those who are most able to profit by the right kind of educational training.

The Content of Christian Education.

In the minds of many Christian people in the past a question as to the subjects of study in Christian education would have been easily answered. The Bible was for them all-sufficient. It is in place to emphasize the importance of a knowledge of the Book of books. It is the core of the curriculum in Christian education. Surveys in academic circles and elsewhere have disclosed an alarming lack of acquaintance with the Bible. Prospects are hopeful that the rising generation will know their Bibles better than the former. Never were fa-

cilities for understanding the Bible so numerous and capable as now.

The present generation of Christian educators is excluding from the religious curriculum no subject which in any way adds enlightenment to our understanding of life as a whole. The Bible is the world's leading authority on spiritual values. These are found increasingly to be in harmony with laws of nature and humanity. Anything which aids in understanding the working of the human mind, the teaching and learning processes, and the laws of the universe is a lawful part of the education of a Christian. Subjects of history, literature, science, and ethics are all of value because they relate the soul to life as it is. The concern which the church has at times felt because general education seemed to militate against spirituality due to the fact that scientific inquiry has gone forward more rapidly than education in religion, and the religious spirit has not been kept in general research. The church may well ask whether she has done her full duty in being alert to the demands of the ages as they pass. There is clearly at the present a reaction against materialistic and agnostic teaching. The most hopeful phase of it is in the ranks of scientists themselves. Lord Kelvin has said: "If you think strongly enough you will be forced by science to the belief in God which is the foundation of all religion. You will find science not antagonistic, but helpful to religion." An eminent group of American scientists and theologians has recently sent out a joint resolution, declaring that science and religion supplement each other in supplying the needs of full human living. Our lesson is that it is the Christian spirit which makes education Christian, and every topic of inquiry a part of the Christian curriculum.

Guiding Principles of a Program.

Let us look briefly at a few basic features of a full

program of Christian education. Space permits but a mere mention of them.

1. **Insist upon the religious motive in all education.** A study of life ought to enrich spiritual experience. The attitude of the Scotch professor who introduced his laboratory experiments by saying, "Now gentlemen let us see what God has to teach us," illustrates the spirit.

2. **Place religious instruction within the reach of all.** The people of a Christian nation may rightfully insist that the opportunity for religious instruction be made as widespread as secular educational opportunities.

3. **Place religious education upon as high a plane as any.** There is every reason why the standards should be such as command respect.

4. **Present religious materials in graded form** according to the developmental periods of those who are being taught.

5. **Demand the highest attainable training upon the part of those who are to teach and administer in religious education.** This does not necessarily mean a finished education, but a disposition of teachers and administrators to neglect no means at hand which enable them to do better work. Some teacher training is within the reach of all.

Agents of Christian Education.

1. **The Christian Home.** Too much cannot be said for parental responsibility in religious beginnings. It is the right of a child to have a godly ancestry of faith, like Timothy (*2* Tim. 1: 5). In 1859 Eld. James Quinter wrote: "Each Christian family should constitute a school for the improvement of its members, and especially for the instruction of the young in the principles of Christianity." The spirit of childhood is educated at home.

2. **The Sunday-school.** This institution deserves honorable mention in the progress of the kingdom of God.

It has provided most of the religious instruction which many Protestant children get. Its history is marked by a continuous outlook toward improvement. Its inadequacy to be the whole agency in education in religion has developed a spirit of encouragement for fuller opportunities than during an hour on Sunday. The particular lines to be strengthened in its work are in organization, curriculum, trained teachers, equipment, home coöperation, and spirit of worship.

3. **The public school.** The Christian church owes a larger duty toward the public school than she has performed. There must not be denominational dictation, but all will unite on a demand for Christian teachers and influence. The system growing in vogue by which religious instruction is given credit in the public schools is commendable. It is known generally as **week-day religious instruction.** The teaching is done in the school itself, by pastors of churches, or by trained directors and teachers engaged by the community. The **daily vacation Bible school** is another enterprise in which churches may work together in cumulative religious teaching for children of the public schools to great profit. It is having great success in both city and country.

4. **The Christian college.** The first colleges in our country were provided by men and women of devout character, who believed that such institutions are indispensable to the progress of the kingdom of God. We admire their faith and agree with their conviction. Our day asks of the Christian college that it provide a liberal education second to none, that it have religious instruction in its credit curriculum, and above all that it furnish training for leadership in the church. From the church schools ninety-five per cent of religious leaders have been coming, and this is the greatest reason for the existence of such institutions.

5. **The seminary and training school.** Herein is offered that type of specialized training in distinctly religious work for those who from home to college have been inspired with such objectives. Pastors, missionaries, religious educators are more and more required to meet the demand for an efficient leadership, and no training can be too good for those whom the Lord calls to spiritual ministry.

6. **The university.** We may not leave so influential an institution as the university, whether state or private, outside of our list of agencies for Christian education. Its place is primarily for graduate training for various life vocations. Much criticism has been leveled toward the university because it has not promoted active church life in many instances. Again, there is reason to believe that the church has not always been sufficiently alert to its duty in having religious culture keep pace with scientific. The situation is improving. Many fine Christian teachers are there and the disposition to offer more courses in religion and Bible is increasing. Christian Associations have done splendid work in the student bodies, and pastors of various churches are being affiliated with student welfare. It is continuously the question of conducting legitimate education under Christian influence.

Promoting Christian Education.

It is convenient to speak of the actual work of promoting education by Christians under two headings.

There is first the **local** phase. The essential localization of educational sentiment is of course in the **individual** Christian. He needs to be informed and convinced in order to coöperate in promotion. The next unit is of course the **local congregation.** It is here that sermons, training classes, study classes, and offerings for education, or the lack of these things, indicate the

amount of interest in education. The efficiency of a Sunday-school is a good index as to what a congregation thinks about the importance of education. There is no better educational tonic for a listless congregation than to have some of its best young people come home from Christian institutions and demonstrate new vision and zeal in the work of the church. Still further than the work of the local congregation is that of the **community** in which groups of churches coöperate to cover the field adequately with opportunities for religious instruction. This they may do under the plans of week-day religious instruction and daily vacation Bible schools already mentioned. It is an effective object lesson for the non-churchgoer to see the various branches of Christians unite to promote the truth which all have in common.

The second phase of promoting Christian education is the **general.** One part of this is the **denominational** encouragement of religious education by means of a secretary, a board of education, or some committee, which functions to fix standards, publish literature, and in other ways unify the educational work of that particular church. There is next the coöperation of various church groups in **interdenominational** activity in the interests of education. This is simply carrying community action into a larger area, and has the advantage of bringing into play the best minds of all denominations. An increasing number of organizations now at work demonstrates the value of such movements. Among them are the International Sunday School Council of Religious Education, the Council of Denominational Boards of Education, the Religious Education Association, the Commission on Christian Education of the Federal Council of Churches, and the Conference of Theological Seminaries of the United States and Canada. From the international phase of united Christian action

in education we advance to the **world** organizations which bring together the Christians of the world for conference and prayer and advance in the work of the kingdom. A conspicuous example is the World's Sunday School Association. In recent years boards of international composition have been appointed to study the problems of Christian education in India and China. The outlook never seemed so bright for the making of spiritual foundations under the processes of education. Ignorance hinders the work of the Lord. Enlightenment is a duty for those who have become enlightened. It is a world task for the Christian church.

Suggestions for Reading

Brown—"A History of Religious Education in Recent Times."

Betts—"A New Program of Religious Education."

Stout—"The Organization and Administration of Religious Education."

Educational Literature—Brethren Publishing House.

A Guide to Lesson Discussion

1. Explain why the Christian religion has any reason to be interested in education.

2. Discuss the aims of religious education. Would you add others?

3. What effect would the achievement of these aims have upon the church? Upon the world?

4. What subjects would you include in a course of Christian education? What would you omit? In each case tell why.

5. What would you add to the guiding principles in a program?

6 What do you find for congratulation in the atti-

tude of your congregation toward the agents of Christian education as named? What for improvement?

7. Show in what respect your community is either awake or asleep with respect to Christian education.

8. What objections do you find to Christian education in your congregation or community? How do you meet them?

9. Does your community coöperate in religious educational effort? Why not? If so, what has been the value of it?

10. What do you know of the general promotive activities of Christian education?

Lesson IX

The Promotion of Christian Ethics

"Ye are the salt of the earth: . . . Ye are the light of the world. . . . Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5: 13-16).

"The true teachers of Christian ethics are the noblest and happiest lives from every generation" (Newman Smyth).

Our Ethical Religion.

Christianity is a spiritual religion. This is a primary truth, and a second is like unto it: Christianity is an ethical religion. The two facts are complementary, for sound ethics always have a spiritual basis.

What do we mean by ethics? The subject has to do with conduct. It has been called the "science of living well." Three questions come to the fore in ethical inquiry: "What is the standard for conduct?" "From what source comes the inspiration for conduct according to this standard?" "In what field does this standard of conduct find application?" Philosophical answers to these inquiries are as follows, in the order given: "The highest good of man"; "Virtue"; and, "Human duty." It has always been true that ethical discussion has a close relation to religion.

Christian ethics is the science of "living according to Christianity." The transformation of inner life effected by the Christian religion is bound to make a man act like a Christian. One reading of the Sermon on the Mount is sufficient to reveal the profound ethical insight of Jesus. The student of his life must be impressed with the constant ethical quality of his conduct. A Christian will therefore answer the questions of

ethical research in terms of God's will for man as revealed in Jesus, the inspiring force of Christian character, and the application of Christianity to life. Christ is the Source and Authority of the Christian standard of conduct. It is a matter of serious concern that his disciples have a growing vision of the practical lines of everyday duty in which Christian ideals are to be realized. "Christian ethics should be a growing knowledge and prophetic understanding of the increasing life of Christ in the world."

One may say that the leading means for promoting Christian ethics is to teach Christianity in its entirety. There is much truth in that statement. Its weakness lies only in its generality. Where the Christian programs of spiritual culture, evangelism, and education are fully carried out we would expect Christian conduct as a natural fruitage. But our very humanity makes it necessary that repeated direction be given for the expression of Christian ideals and motives in order that practice may complement profession, that impulse may not perish with emotion, and that works be not divorced from faith. It is still possible for believers to become so interested in keeping themselves "unspotted from the world" that they fail to do their duty to "orphans and widows" (Jas. 1: 27). The devotional and practical in genuine religion are inseparable. The ethics of the former is in vision and motive; the ethics of the latter is in action and effect.

The church is under obligation to act as a school of ethics in educating motives and stimulating conduct. This process is not so much one of direct teaching as of living example. It is for Christian people to discern Christian principles, to be on the alert for opportunities to set them into action, and to show the way to make applications by going forward first. We will notice several vital ethical attitudes and activities in

which the Christian church is the logical leader because they were characteristic of Christ.

Quickening the Conscience.

"I often read the sacred books of the various great teachers. They all seem to me to commend much the same virtues—courage, unselfishness, courtesy, loyalty. And I have asked myself, What is the difference between your great Teacher and the others. It seems to me that **he has the power to create a more delicate conscience.**" These were the words of an eminent Chinese gentleman to an American minister. They convey a striking tribute to the power of Christ over that inner light of man which we call conscience. The nature of conscience is suggested by the etymology of the word. It is a "companion of knowledge." That is to say, this moral element of personality acts in accordance with the enlightenment of truth which a man has through his intellect and intuition. The more a person knows and believes about Christ, the more is his conscience Christian. It is highly desirable that every individual Christian, and the church as a whole, have an acute sensitiveness to right and wrong and a disposition to respond quickly to any call for righteous action which may arise.

Questions of conscience are constantly arising out of the economic, political, and social life of which we all are a part. No sweeping rules may be made which cover all cases alike, but the Christian is eager for the fullest light as to the mind of Christ on these problems. Those in the church best qualified to interpret the teachings of Jesus in a practical way are under the duty of serving the larger body of Christians in this matter. Of course the ultimate decision for action rests with the individual conscience enlightened by expanding consciousness of the truth and reinforced by the courage which comes

from a will surrendered to Christ. Christ addressed his appeal for faith and loyalty to the conscience of his hearers, and it is by following his example that Christians may expect to win those outside the church to the winsome Gospel.

A Sense of Personal Value.

The worth of a man is an ethical consideration of paramount importance. None other than Jesus understood the value of human personality and appraised it with justice. He taught that it is a serious thing to estimate humanity by any other standard than that of the Father himself. Man is of greater value than property or institutions. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12: 15). One soul is worth more than the whole material world (Luke 9: 25). The sacred law of health takes precedence over the institutions of the Sabbath (Mark 2: 27). Man is superior to lower forms of life (Matt. 6: 26-30). Jesus' final appraisal of the worth of men was in entrusting the work of the kingdom to them and going to the cross in the confidence that his trust would be kept.

Society constantly needs attention called to human value. Industrialism tends to underestimate the worth of persons. Organization always contains the germs of peril for the rights of individuals. It is no credit to any civilization to have business placed above life. The church is the world's greatest advocate of the safety and worth of personality. An appreciation of the worth of the soul is the core of evangelistic zeal. Education is a saving and developing process. The church is bound to speak strongly against any practice which degrades or enslaves human life, of whatever sex, color, or nationality.

"The principle of reverence for personality is the rul-

ing principle in ethics, and in religion; it constitutes, therefore, the truest and highest test of either an individual or a civilization; it has been, even unconsciously, the guiding and determining principle in all human progress; and in its religious interpretation, it is, indeed, the one faith that keeps meaning and value for life" (Pres. H. C. King).

Stewardship.

"It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful," wrote the great apostle (1 Cor. 4: 2), having in mind the discharge of his duties as a Christian minister. Peter exhorted his readers to be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. 4: 10). It was clearly the thought of these earliest interpreters of Christ that the very lives they lived and gifts they possessed were held in trust for spiritual service. With this inevitably went all the material possessions at their command. From the accounts in Acts 2 and 4 it may be that some even believed that they might hold no property at all, but this opinion did not long prevail. The teachings of Christ came to be understood as making wealth a matter of management for the service of the kingdom. The significant thing about money is the consecrated life which controls it. Otherwise money is a temptation and peril to the highest spiritual good of men.

The Christian religion says to the honest holder of property, "You are only a steward over this." If even this relation imperils the soul it may be necessary to apply the rigorous treatment which Jesus recommended to the rich young man (Matt. 19: 16-21). "Stewardship," says Versteeg, "is the practice of property for the purposes of God." Attention to the Father's business is the keynote of Jesus' teaching concerning wealth (Matt. 6: 33). Where wealth can be used to advance the righteousness of the kingdom, it has a high and

blessed use. In consideration of the necessity for means to promote evangelism and education, the Christian has not far to look to find channels in which to make his money serve the Lord. Besides these, the world is full of opportunities for direct benevolence. "Nothing can prevent mankind from sinking beneath the tremendous temptations due to modern wealth and power save the creation of a strong religious life which shall lead us to consecrate our control over nature to the process of bringing in the kingdom of God" (Gerald B. Smith).

The practical outworking of stewardship is largely to be determined by the individual Christian. It may include tithing, but it is more than that. A prudent administration of affairs, a curtailment of extravagant personal expenses, careful distribution of that which is devoted directly to the Lord, are all involved. The member of a Christian church has not yet learned to discharge his financial obligations to the kingdom until he gives regularly, systematically, and in just proportions to the local and general needs of the church program.

Vicarious Living.

A prominent native of India, much in sympathy with Christianity, was commenting upon the contradictory character of Western civilization in relation to its religion. He said: "Your civilization is based on the struggle for power. And the struggle for power is forbidden by the Christian religion."

This keen foreign observer saw to the heart of Jesus' way of life. From the outset of his ministry our Lord put away the temptation to advance the kingdom of God by means of earthly power. He chose rather the path of self-renunciation of personal ambition and the method of dedicating himself to the service of mankind. It was the way of the cross, and he recommended that way to men. We are usually more ready to thank Jesus for taking up his cross than for his advice to take up our own.

Vicarious living means living in behalf of others. It is costly to self-ambition. But service to an ideal is always expensive. The fact which makes one able to pay the price is appreciation of the ideal. "For the joy that was set before him," Jesus, "endured the cross, despising shame" (Heb. 12: 2). Livingstone in Africa said: "People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. . . . It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say, rather, it is a privilege." Men have failed to find peace within and goodwill without by way of the pursuit of wealth and pleasure and power. The resulting confusion of this way of life is argument enough why it is reasonable to ask men, and especially those who profess the Christian religion, to give a fair trial to the way of redeeming and self-renouncing love and service which Jesus exemplified. "A Christian world is not only practicable; in the long run it will be found that no other sort is practicable" (Ellwood).

Vicarious living of course begins with the individual in his grasp on the principles of brotherhood, forgiveness, and helpfulness. The more he knows of Jesus the better he will know these principles. As applied to economic affairs his emphasis will be upon giving, not getting. In society he will find his place among those who minister. In political things his concern will be to labor for that justice and righteousness which exalts a government, instead of the armament and soldiery which precipitate warfare. In all likelihood there will at some point be personal suffering to be endured. But the Christian believer is expected from the outset to be ready to pay the price which his religion requires. The love of Christ is sufficient to enable for the work of winning a Christian world.

The Church in Action.

The church will find her most effective method as the teacher of Christian ethics to be by way of her own

ethical example. By her own sensitiveness to right and wrong, her estimate of personal worth, her management of worldly goods, and her willingness to suffer for her faith and in her service, she will be the living epistle of Christ for men to read and the inspiring leader for the world of mankind to follow. And it is evident that the hearts of men are longing for such leadership to assert itself in greater power. A church of lax moral example, which values ecclesiastical organization above individual development, which is rich or careless about the use of wealth, and loves pleasure more than toil, is a church from which the Christian ideal has departed.

The objective of those who love the truth of Christ is first of all to inspire individual life with that love. Ethics begins in personal choice and action. It is voluntary and not forced. Second, is the formation of a collective church conscience and a united stand for Jesus' way of living. Then follows the effect of such a church in a community where it is the leader of morality. It is common for Christians to deplore the low moral tone of their environment. It is their business to change it for the better. And, finally, the influence of Christian individuals, congregations, and communities shall reach the nation and the world. It is well known that President Harding, himself a devout Christian, was encouraged in his decision to call the Armament Conference at Washington by the solicitation of the churches.

All the process of Christian education offers avenues for the spread of ethical teaching. The messages of the Christian pulpit need more and more to be after the manner of the prophets in giving light on the application of religion to life. Groups may be organized for the study of ethical questions, a course of untold value for Christians, young and old. Many churches have found great profit in conducting community forums for the discussion of questions on applied Christianity. The

church has not yet used to the full advantage the press, both secular and religious, in declaring her voice on matters of private and public righteousness. It were worth while for all Christian people to know of the action of the English and American Friends in declaring their position as a people on the subject of war, and appealing for a coöperating attitude on the part of the Christian church at large:

"The most pressing reform of our time is to abolish war, and to establish exclusively peaceful means of settling disputes and promoting coöperation among the nations. . . . To accomplish these results the Christian church in practice and profession must condemn the whole system of war unequivocally and finally, relying not upon armed preparedness, but upon the awakened conscience of mankind. . . .

"What greater message of cheer and reconstruction could be brought to mankind today than the assurance that all who bear the name of Christ in every land have solemnly resolved to have no part in war or preparation for war, but henceforth to work unitedly for peace by peaceful means alone? Shall we not make this venture of faith together in the love that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and that never fails? Shall the torch of spiritual heroism be borne by the church of the living Christ, or shall leadership in the utter rejection of war pass from our hands to men of braver and truer spirits? Which Master shall we who call ourselves Christians be known by all the world to serve, the God of Battles or the Prince of Peace?"

Suggestions for Reading

Clarke—"The Ideal of Jesus," Chap. X, XII.
Versteeg—"The Deeper Meaning of Stewardship.'
Eddy—"Facing the Crisis," Chap. XIV, XX.

Fosdick—"The Meaning of Service."

Gulick—"The Christian Crusade for a Warless World."

A Guide to Lesson Discussion

1. Define Christian ethics. How is it related to religion?

2. Is ethical teaching best done by direct instruction or indirect?

3. What do you understand by conscience? What makes it Christian?

4. Describe the conscience of your church; of your community.

5. Is personality valued highly in your community? Why, or why not?

6. Explain the meaning of stewardship.

7. What is vicarious living? Why is it Christian? Illustrate it.

8. Set forth the duty of the church as a teacher of Christian ethics. What are some means by which she may do it?

9. In what ethical respects is your congregation to be commended? In what is there room for improvement?

10. How should the church respond to the appeal of the Friends? On what other important issues may the Christian church take a definite stand for leadership?

Lesson X

The Social Application of Christianity

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. 6: 10).

"'Tis a lifelong toil till our lump be leavened" (Browning).

The Social Ideal of Jesus.

Jesus did not find a perfect society when he lived as a Man among men. He came as a member of a group that was eagerly looking for a better social order. The Jews were anticipating a new state in which Israel should be supreme, the Messiah in control, and all other peoples as subjects (Luke 17: 20, 21; 19: 11; Acts 1: 6). Jesus took this hope as he found it and sought to give it a new interpretation in spiritual terms, making it universal rather than Jewish, a life embracing all mankind.

In this way Jesus fell heir to the idea of a kingdom to come and heralded his ministry with the announcement of the nearness of "the kingdom of heaven." This was his social ideal comprehending the unity of men in a brotherhood under divine Fatherhood. The keynote of the kingdom of God is subjection to the divine will (Matt. 6: 10; Mark 3: 35). The Master's teaching contained the seeds of a regenerated social order which has aptly been described as "the rule and realm of God in the hearts and lives of men" (Clow). It is a kingdom which has meaning for both the present and the future, the gift of life which is eternal. Wherever there is a heart, a home, or a nation, in which the will of God is the standard by which conduct is regulated, there is the kingdom of God. Jesus was confident that there would be heaven upon earth where the will of God is done among men.

Let us observe that the social ideal of Jesus is identical with his ideal for the individual. These are two complementary aspects of the full Christian Gospel. Christ's first address was to the individual soul. His religion is built upon a deep regard for human personality. It is therefore bound to be interested in all affairs that affect mankind. No individual is separable from society. That is impossible from the social nature of each person. All social conditions have an effect upon character and are therefore to be considered for their value in the development of the whole personality. Social Christianity would transform the environment in which a Christian is compelled to live. John Wesley said, "The Bible knows nothing of a solitary religion." Christian character is a social as well as a private matter. Jesus' approach to every social question was by way of the renewed individual.

Vital Social Principles.

Space forbids a detailed treatment of the principles which underlie Jesus' conception of a Christian social order. We can but mention a few of the most prominent truths which form a basis for constructive social interest and action on the part of Christian people who are earnestly seeking to promote the spiritual and eternal kingdom of God.

1. **Reverence for God.** Such should be the ruling disposition of a Christian social order. A peaceful and wholesome society can be established only on a religious basis. The world operates according to a divine order, and the man who has not discovered enough of this to believe in the goodness of God has not yet found an anchor for his life. The Christian recognizes the Father of Jesus as his Father and the Source of all blessing. He is therefore led to do his daily work in the sight of him to whom he may confidently trust the issues of life.

2. **Brotherhood.** The attitude of members of Christian society toward each other is summed up in brotherliness. It is a cardinal test of Christian character that every man be treated as an equal. This conception transcends all differences due to wealth and class in the recognition of human kinship and social solidarity. Of course, brotherliness in the highest sense is centered in those who are within the spiritual family of Christ. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another" (John 13: 35). The extension of this attitude toward all men is clearly taught in passages which exhort love toward all men, even enemies (Matt. 5: 43-47). The gist of the matter rests in the fact that all human persons are much alike and their development is largely due to the social contacts which they make upon each other. They owe to each other the duty of love, kindliness, sympathy, and constructive fellowship.

3. **Applied Christian Ethics.** This is implied in the foregoing, and is in fact an all-inclusive statement. Human society is the field for the operation of Christian ethics. Out of the wholesome touch of personalities grows a social conscience which is capable of united action on moral questions. Such practical Christianity appreciates human value, forbids exploitation of the weak, works toward spiritual ends by Christian means, and spends itself in sacrificing service.

4. **Humanitarian organization.** In view of the fact that people everywhere have common needs and natures, it naturally follows that all society is best served when all coöperate in what we call organization. Christian society is organized on simple lines. Jesus came into a world full of political, social and ecclesiastical machinery. His life was a model in putting the human emphasis above the institutional and mechanical. It is therefore a quality of a Christian social order that all

organization be subject to human welfare. Every soul is entitled to its opportunity for self-realization. Each custom, law, or institution of society ought to serve the health and happiness of people.

5. **A hopeful outlook.** No man who looks upon his generation with disgust or distrust is in a position to serve the Christian ideal. The Christian religion is a religion of faith and hope and love. It magnifies God and exalts humanity. The members of the Christian social order are willing to work with God at his own pace to bring about a transformed society which believes that truth cannot die, that God's will shall prevail, and that "he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 1: 17).

Christian Institutions.

Any social order inevitably develops institutions as a means of self-expression. By means of them customs and practices become fixed. Christianity must affect these if society is to be Christian. The tests of the institutions in a social order claiming to be Christian are: How do they stand the searchlight of the ethical principles of Jesus? and, What is their effect upon human personality? By these may all men know whether or not institutions have grown out of seeds planted by Christ. There are three basic social institutions: the family, state, and church. For purposes of discussion we may add to these industry and philanthropy, though these are not institutional in the same sense as the others.

1. **The family.** Human life begins with the family and in it sustains the most vital and intimate relation of persons. The most direct teaching of Jesus on the subject is to be found in Matt. 19: 3-9; Mark 10: 2-12; Luke 16: 18. His specific points on marriage here are that it is a creational and permanent arrangement which is not to be easily dissolved. The whole family idea is

exalted by Jesus' use of its terms, "Father," "brother," "son," "home," "love," as figures for the relationships of the kingdom of heaven.

The establishment of a home may be called the supreme adventure of human love. The Gospel of Christ is needed to make it and preserve it. Christian individuals are necessary if a home is to be Christian. The application of Christ's principles for righteous living would mean more thoughtful entrance upon the responsibilities of married life and a realization of its permanent ties. We are properly alarmed by the startling divorce statistics of the present time. This situation clearly indicates the necessity for spiritual ideals in addition to human love in order to make happy home life.

The social value of the home centers in children. A family is the means by which society receives the contributions of life and character. Its paramount consideration is the well-being of childhood in care and education and culture. Christianity exalts this duty of rearing children for society and nurturing them in the highest religious ideals.

2. **The state.** This term is used here in a wide sense to convey the idea of human government, whether it be local, municipal, national, or even world-wide in scope. Our emphasis upon civil organization is as a means to social efficiency and welfare. The purposes and nature of democratic government were never better expressed than by President Lincoln when he said, "This is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people." A government is an institution which grows up with the needs of people, is maintained by their will, and for their benefit. It is an agent of human service.

We turn to the Gospels in vain to find any systematic teaching of Jesus with regard to affairs of statecraft. His own example was one of law-abiding citizenship. His principles which bear on the subject are general and

scattered. The most familiar of these is the injunction, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (Mark 12: 17). The principle is that men do have a duty toward government, as well as toward God, and that the two do not conflict. In John 19: 11 Jesus, in speaking to Pilate, indicated that civil authority is of divine appointment. Paul elaborated this point in Rom. 13: 1-7, showing that government is established for the chief purpose of serving mankind.

Three foundation principles of civil organization are order, liberty, and opportunity. This applies to society from the community to the world. To maintain these requires a high order of principles in public life. The Christian religion aims at the production of character which is necessary to keep government true to its divinely-appointed end. In such hands it will be found that the best protection against wrong is righteousness, that differences may be adjudicated by peaceful methods, and that health and happiness will be found in the operation of Christian principles. Education, sanitation, culture, and peace are all elements for Christian promotion.

3. **The church.** But little needs to be added here to what has been said about the church, the organization in which Christians act together in worship and service. Its function is to act as an organ of religion. We all agree that it cannot stand aloof from social questions, for all these are ethical and religious at the roots. The church must constantly furnish the spiritual ideals needed in politics, industry, and society at large. She doubtless best serves this purpose when she cultivates individual influence for righteousness, and holds Christian principles before the public.

4. **Industry.** We cannot evade the material basis of human living. The whole organization of industrial

life is founded upon the purpose of providing for human needs. No man can be at his best unless he is supplied with the necessities of food, raiment, shelter, and any other factor which contributes to his health and comfort.

The social emphasis of Christianity demands that attention be given to the practical problems of life. The benefits of property should be extended to all, and economic life be understood as a means of service. Labor conditions must be conducive to health and morality. It were well worth while to inquire what present institutions and methods of business would disappear if the teachings of Jesus were fairly applied to industry. The present movement toward safety of limb and life, and for cultivation of mind and morals among the ranks of workers, is commendable. It is necessary, too, to see that clean and real recreation is provided for all who come under the strain of toil. The social values of play, for children and adults, is having increasing recognition. In this same connection something may be said for what are known as the leisure classes, who are under no necessity for regular labor. They are not Christian unless they find some avenue of service to humanity instead of dissipating their time and energy in idleness. Society can prosper only so long as the principle of the Golden Rule is operative in labor, to the destruction of the predatory spirit in the use of material goods.

5. **Philanthropy.** It was once the attitude of people in general that social ills were ordained to be, and that duty toward them was discharged by the ameliorating process of dispensing charity. Early ages accepted poverty, misery, and abnormality as inevitable, and sought to avoid these things as much as possible. Christian teaching with regard to them involves wide human sympathy and immediate helpfulness. The church from

the outset cared for its own poor and unfortunate and developed institutions and asylums for the needy. Compare the lack of hospitals in non-Christian lands with the increasing number in those lands in which the Gospel has had free rein. Advancing science and knowledge has led to the substitution of constructive philanthropy for indiscriminate charity.

Under human conditions there will doubtless for a long while be conditions which call for immediate and direct giving to the unfortunate. It has been proved that this process persistently engaged in is not wholesome for the recipients. Constructive philanthropy therefore would add to the relief of immediate need a study of the causes of misfortune, seek to provide better living conditions, inspire the unfortunate to help themselves and give the opportunity to do so, and in general endeavor to raise the level of standards and conditions of health and safety. The Christian ideal of charity for the poor, the defective, and the anti-social or criminals, is not only that of care or repression, but also the cure and prevention of such unfortunate conditions. No story of the present day is more interesting than that of the progress of Christian principles at the hands of medical and social scientists.

The Social Program.

Since human society is the field in which Christianity operates, there can be no doubt but that it has an application to every practical problem which enters into the experience of people. The Christian spirit would say that every social evil should be eliminated as rapidly as light is received upon the way by which to accomplish it. It is clear that no one may ever be made righteous by law, but it is true that legal methods are sometimes lawful and effective for the repression of men with evil minds. It is a rare Christian who does not give the laws of prohibition much credit for the checking of the iniquitous liquor traffic. At the same time we all recognize the superior value of having men vol-

untarily refuse to drink or sell intoxicants. The passing of laws looking toward righteousness is the signal for action upon the part of every Christian to wield an influence toward the love of the righteousness at which the law aims.

The social gospel of Jesus aims to implant the saving power of God in the whole of the social order. Since conditions affect the character of men, it is frequently necessary to change those conditions. A Christian society first exists in the personal ideals of those who constitute it. Therefore the social duty of the Christian church is first to be faithful to her mission of evangelism and education. Only the profoundly religious motive is sufficient for a sound basis of effective social reconstruction. Any new order of society is conditioned upon the coöperation of the individuals who have the disposition and ability to work for it and maintain it.

Four steps may be mentioned as a practical way by which the church may effectively conduct a social program:

a. A clear interpretation of the teachings of Jesus in terms of social life.

b. A definite knowledge of social facts as they are, involving an effort to ascertain causes and methods of practical prevention.

c. An emphatic influence by pulpit, pew, press, and individual, upon the side of righteousness in industry, politics, and social life.

d. A supply of leadership of personal service in making kingdom ideals operative in human society in the spirit of Jesus.

Suggested Readings

Montgomery—"The Social Message of Jesus."

Henderson—"Social Duties from the Christian Point of View."

Clow—"Christ in the Social Order."

Rauschenbusch—"The Social Principles of Jesus."

A Guide to Lesson Discussion

1. Describe the social ideal of Jesus.
2. Discuss the relation of the individual to society, and of society to the individual.
3. For what reason is reverence for God vital to society?
4. Name some factors you would expect in Christian brotherhood.
5. What forms the keystone in social organization?
6. Discuss the right attitude for a Christian toward society.
7. Of what social importance is the family? How does Christian teaching affect it?
8. How is civil government a servant of society?
9. Is the church ever responsible for social ills? Why?
10. What would you expect in a Christian industrial order?
11. What are the opportunities for constructive philanthropy in your community? What is being done?
12. What sort of social program is possible for your church?

STUDIES IN THE DEVOTIONAL LIFE

by

M. W. Emmert

Studies in the Devotional Life

1. Nature of the Devotional Life 275
2. Importance of the Devotional Life 281
3. Secret Prayer, a Factor in the Devotional Life 287
4. Bible Study, a Factor in the Devotional Life ...294
5. Meditation, a Factor in the Devotional Life 301
6. Public Worship, a Factor in the Devotional Life 308
7. The Holy Spirit's Part in the Devotional Life ..314
8. A Model Lesson in Devotional Bible Study from the Psalms 321
9. A Model Lesson in Devotional Bible Study from the Prayers in the Bible 327
10. A Model Lesson in Devotional Bible Study from the Gospels 333

Studies in the Devotional Life

M. W. EMMERT

Lesson I

Nature of the Devotional Life

1. **Definition.** The word "devotion" is derived from the Latin word "devoveo," meaning to give one's self wholly to any object. When we speak of a man being devoted to any cause in the fullest sense, we mean he is giving himself wholly to that cause. One may be devoted to a person. In such a case he gives his whole thought and attention to that person.

A life of devotion in the sphere of the Christian religion is a life in which one's self is fully given to Christ. His thought and attention are centered in Christ and the cause which was nearest to Christ's heart; viz., the kingdom of heaven. Jesus died that he might establish this kingdom. By entering this men secure eternal life. The true spirit of devotion to Christ would lead one to die, if need be, for the same cause for which Christ died.

Some of the most marked elements of the devotional life are, (1) the exercise of faith in Christ as being interested in all the affairs of life; (2) the constant yielding of one's self to Christ for service in establishing his kingdom; (3) an ever-present consciousness of intimate fellowship with Christ; (4) an habitual looking up to him instead of down to the world; (5) a prayer of joyful gratitude unceasingly bubbling forth as an overflow from the heart; and (6) a persistent daily waiting to hear the voice of God speaking through nature and his Word to the soul.

2. **An Illustration.** Every Christian may be said to live in a room with a skylight in the roof leading out under the broad expanse of heaven, and a trap door in the floor leading down to a dark, subterranean passageway. The man who lives the devotional life spends his time looking out of the skylight. The man who is undevotional spends his time looking through the trap door. The one allows the light of the Son of God to shine into and penetrate every activity of life. Whether in the field, shop, kitchen or countinghouse; whether in the home, closet, church or place of recreation; whether in health, sickness, joy or sorrow, the light of heaven throws a gleam of splendor and peaceful satisfaction over the soul, rendering life radiant with the glory of Christ. The other allows the darkness of the world to shoot arrows of remorse for sin through the heart, and the hand of selfish lust to drag the soul into the dust of despair. The one is a life striving for more complete conformity to the will of God and panting after the everlasting enjoyment of his friendship. The other is a life devoted to selfish interests, not necessarily to the total exclusion of religion, but only exercising enough of the religious phase of life to lead into a delusion concerning the fear of coming judgment.

3. **Three Relations.** "We stand related to the earth beneath us, to our fellow-men around us and to God above us." The highest and most profound relationship is the one we sustain to God. The devotional life is the cultivation and expression of this highest relationship. In the devotional life, the relations we sustain to earth, or nature, and to our fellow-men, or society are instruments for bringing us into a closer relationship to God. They are not an end in themselves; they are only a means to an end. When these two lower relationships have become complete servants of the higher, we may be said to be living the devotional life.

It is perilous for a Christian to live on the plane of

the first two relations. The devil has access to these. He succeeded in seducing Adam and Eve in the sphere of the earthly relation (Gen. 3: 1-6). Cain was overcome in his social relations (Gen. 4: 9). But Satan has no power whatever over us in the sphere of the spiritual. Paul's strong language in Rom. 8: 31-39 should be read to see the full force of this last statement.

4. **The Life of Faith.** "The righteous shall live by faith" (Gal. 3: 11; 2: 20). Faith is the appropriating power of the soul. All of God's promises are appropriated by faith. Just as the leaves of the tree are the instruments by which the tree appropriates the elements of the atmosphere and the rays of light from the sun, so faith is the instrument by which the Christian reaches out and takes possession of the divine nature. By this means the divine life is born into the soul, and the soul grows in spiritual life and power. The devotional life is one which is hourly spreading its leaves of faith out to the sunshine of God's truth in the Bible or nature or both and appropriating it to the life of the soul.

Even our daily toil may be a part of our devotional life. We may enter each task of the day by an exercise of faith. Each duty may be performed consciously in the presence and service of God. On arising in the morning, while dressing, we may speak to God after this manner: "Dear Lord, I arise to enter the toils of another day. I shall probably encounter in the routine of the day some annoying conditions, some fierce temptations, some disappointments or perhaps affliction. Thou knowest what the day has in store for me. I commit my way to thee. I have ever found thee a present help in time of need. I now know thou wilt cause all things to work together for my good and thy glory; therefore, I trust all to thee."

With such an exercise of faith the day's toil may

commence. But the beginning of each new task during the day is the occasion for one to glance up through the skylight and take a fresh grip, by faith, on Christ. One may say in his soul: "This task is thine, O Christ, not mine. Make me a perfect instrument in the performance of the same." In this manner faith sets the whole life sweetly under the eye and supervision of Christ.

The Sunday-school teacher is preëminently in need of this close fellowship with Christ, through faith, in order that he may daily live the righteous life. The exercise of faith should not be confined to the study and teaching of the Sunday-school lesson. In order that faith may become effective and serviceable in the study and teaching of the lesson it must be exercised in every task performed throughout the week. The devotional life requires one to bring Christ into partnership with him in all his undertakings, whether small or great, secular or religious. In fact, no work should be strictly secular; all work should be done as unto the Lord, thus breaking down the barrier between the secular and religious and blending the two into one (1 Cor. 10: 31; Col. 3: 17). Our whole thought and attention, as stated in the first paragraph of this chapter, may then be centered in Christ and his work, since we allow all our work to be his work.

5. **The Surrendered Life.** "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2: 20). In the truly devotional life, Christ has become not only our Savior, but the Master of our lives. This is an unconditional surrender of our lives to Christ. He comes in and takes complete control of body, mind, will and spirit. Christ literally comes into our life and constitutes himself our very being, so that when we work it is no longer we that work, but Christ working through us; when we speak it is no longer we that speak, but Christ speaking

through us; when we teach it is no longer we that teach, but Christ teaching through us. We have, therefore, become one with Christ. He is no longer outside of us, giving us help, but is within, operating through us as an instrument. We need no longer pray for his help to do his work, but pray that we may in every case fully surrender ourselves to him so that he can do his work through us. Just as a carpenter transforms a board into a beautiful piece of furniture by the use of a saw, plane, hammer and chisel, so Christ transforms society by the use of teacher, preacher, housekeeper and merchant.

The devotional life can never be real and satisfying until we have fully surrendered ourselves to Christ as our only Master. It is then that we are on the best possible terms with Christ and so run to him often as a little child runs to its mother. This sentiment is beautifully expressed in the chorus of a familiar song:

"I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
Over mountain, or plain or sea;
I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,
I'll be what you want me to be."

Test Questions

1. What is the original meaning of the word "devotion"?
2. What would the true spirit of devotion to Christ lead one to do?
3. What are some of the marked elements of the devotional life?
4. What simple illustration sets forth the nature of the devotional life?
5. What three relations does every Christian man have? Which is the highest and safest relation? Why?
6. What is the power by which the soul appropriates the promises of God?

7. What part of life's duties lies within the sphere of the devotional life?
8. What should be the occasion for one frequently to take a fresh grip on Christ through the exercising of our faith?
9. What must be done that faith may become serviceable in the study and teaching of the Sunday-school lesson?
10. What is meant by Christ becoming the Master of our lives?
11. Have you committed to memory the scriptures introducing paragraphs four and five?

Lesson II

Importance of the Devotional Life

Whether a thing is worth while or not, may be determined by considering results. Good results must have something meritorious back of and producing them. We shall study a few of the leading results of the devotional life to arrive at an appreciation of its importance.

1. **The Devotional Life Is a Growing Life.** "As newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation" (1 Pet. 2: 2). "Salvation" in this text refers to complete deliverance from evil which awaits a believer in heaven. The process by which that goal is reached is growth, and the growth is produced by drinking spiritual milk or eating spiritual food. If we are to eat spiritual food, it is necessary for us to stay in the place where the food may be obtained. The devotional life is the spiritual pasture field and the spiritual water brook where the soul eats and drinks continually, being led by the Lord to where the pastures are green and the waters are cool and refreshing.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still waters" (Psa. 23: 2).

"It is only living things that grow; and all living things do grow." If a Christian man discovers he is not growing, he has cause for alarm. There are only two alternatives for him in that condition. He is either dying or else he is dead. The mother who finds her child is not growing becomes concerned and consults a physician. Solomon said, "But the path of the righteous is as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4: 18).

2. **The Devotional Life Is a Life of Power.**—"I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Philpp. 4: 13). Paul's power for service lay in Christ. In pro-

portion as he allowed Christ to live in him and use him, did he have power to do the great work of a missionary to the Gentiles. Jesus said just before his ascension, "All authority [power in A. V.] hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." He then commanded the disciples to go and evangelize the world, adding these words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Christ has all power at his command and he is with us. Not only is he **with us**, but **in us**, as we have seen in our previous lesson. If Christ is in us and has command of all power in heaven and in earth, we have within us the power of the universe; and as Paul says, "can do all things," that is, all things that our Heavenly Father lays upon us to do. Since the devotional life is the life that has been surrendered to Christ to be used by him as an instrument, it is a life of power in Christ's service.

3. **The Devotional Life Is a Life of Victory.** "For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5: 4). Just before leaving the world Jesus said to his disciples, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Through faith in Christ we are begotten (born) of God (1 John 5: 1), become partakers of the Christ-life. We, therefore, share in his victory over sin and the evil one.

Since Christ lives in us and works through us as instruments in all the duties of life, he also fights our battles against sin and the devil for us, if we let him do so. We often fail in conquering sin because we try to fight our own battles with Satan, or we invite Christ in only to help us, keeping him in the rear as a sort of reserve. We should turn the whole battle over to Christ, give him the first place, and he will give us the victory. The victory over Satan is nothing short of miraculous. We are always in a losing fight with Satan, unless we turn the battle over to the only

One who ever won a complete and final victory over him.

The more devoted we are to Christ, the more completely does he enter our life and make common cause with us. Our fight against the sins of the world is his fight; hence he will give us the victory over our besetting sins, if we are sufficiently devoted to him, if we do not make the same mistake the Israelites made on the borders of Canaan. They failed to enter because they thought of their own strength in the face of giants and walled cities. They took the battle away from God, and the enemy was too strong for them. Had they been sufficiently devoted to God, the victory would have been theirs. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able" (1 Cor. 10: 13).

4. **The Devotional Life Is a Fruit-bearing Life.** "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing" (John 15: 5). A few minutes' prayerful meditation on this most wonderful statement of spiritual truth will cause it to yield a volume of heavenly comfort and satisfaction to the Christian man. If we are branches of which Christ is the Vine, we are vitally united with Christ. We are not standing close beside him, nor are we tied to him, but we are organically united with him so that the same sap that is life to him, the Vine, flows up through the Vine and out through us, the branches, giving the same sort of life to us as is in the Vine. If the Vine is a fruit-bearing vine—and it is—the branch also must be fruit-bearing. The very nature of the sap supplied by the vine to the branch requires the branch to yield fruit. If we maintain the close union with Christ, which is the essence of the devotional life, it is impossible to be barren or unfruitful. As Christ became a

blessing to all with whom he came in contact, so we shall be a blessing to all with whom we associate.

By fruit we mean anything issuing from our lives that blesses the lives of others. Fruit is never produced for the benefit of the vine that yields it, but for the benefit of life around the vine. So the fruit of our lives is not for ourselves but for others.

As Sunday-school teachers we need not be concerned about the fruit. We may safely leave that all with Christ. Our only concern should be to abide in him, and allow him fully to possess our lives. He will see to the kind and quantity of fruit we yield. In proportion as we devote our lives to Christ, he will make them fruitful, a benediction to the world.

5. **The Devotional Life Is a Life of Joy.** "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15: 11). Prince Bismarck, one of Germany's greatest modern statesmen, near the close of life said, "During my whole life I have not had twenty-four hours of happiness." Although eighty-one years old, he had never seen a real happy day. Either his life was not devoted to Christ, or the parting promise of Christ to his disciples is a farce. We know, however, that the promise of fullness of joy has been realized by an innumerable company of saints since the day on which the promise was made. Wealth, fame, honor, and influence could not give Prince Bismarck one day of happiness, but devotion to Christ has brought a whole life of joy to millions in the humbler walks of life. With Christ in the soul, joy can flourish in any soil. It defies external conditions. True devotion to Christ leads us to say, "All things work together for good to them that love God." We refuse to be shaken by outward circumstances from sweet, peaceful trust in Christ, who gives fullness of joy.

How could it be otherwise ? Christ, who is one with

God and does only that which he has seen the Father do, is directing our lives. Therefore, our lives must be in perfect harmony with the Father. If in harmony with the Father, then in harmony with the laws of nature of which the Father is the Author. There is harmony in every sphere of life, physical, intellectual, and moral. Harmony always produces soothing effects. Discord produces the opposite effect. Harmony is the secret of the joy of heaven. In so far as we allow Christ to bring harmony into our souls, we have heaven on earth or fullness of joy in this world.

In these two lessons we have set forth ideal conditions in the devotional life. Lest some become discouraged because their life comes so far from measuring up to the ideal, we wish to repeat the thought presented in the first paragraph of this lesson—the devotional life is a growing life. We have been setting a goal toward which every Christian who would do work for the Lord should strive. In succeeding chapters it shall be our purpose to present suggestive methods by which the weakest one can successfully reach the sweetest and most intimate fellowship with Christ our Lord.

Test Questions

1. How may we come to realize the importance of the devotional life?
2. Name the five leading results of the devotional life.
3. How is spiritual growth produced?
4. When a Christian ceases to grow what does he do?
5. What is the Christian's source of power? How does that power become operative?
6. What is the sure way to win the victory over sin?
7. Why did Israel fail in the first attempt to enter Canaan? What bearing has this on our subject?
8. How close must a fruit-bearing Christian be to Christ?

9. What should be the Sunday-school teacher's only concern regarding fruit-bearing?
10. What does Christ promise his disciples concerning joy?
11. What relation does harmony have to joy?

Lesson III

Secret Prayer, a Factor in the Devotional Life

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee" (Matt. 6: 6).

The expression of an idea is necessary to the keeping of it. That which is not expressed dies. The best way to kill an idea, or any other product of the soul, is to deny it all expression. Just as the invisible soul lives in a visible body, so thoughts, feelings, and aspirations live in formal acts. To be a little more specific, love, when denied outward expression, grows cold and finally dies. On the other hand, the normal outward expression of love causes it to grow more warm, intense and real. What we have said about ideas, thoughts, emotions and aspirations living or dying in proportion as we do or do not give them expression, introduces us to the next four lessons.

Devotion to Christ is an inward, invisible, spiritual reality which, in order that it shall live and grow strong, producing a life of power, victory, fruit-bearing and fullness of joy, must find legitimate and normal expression.

There are many ways by which this may be done, but at least four fundamental methods of giving expression to and cultivating the devotional life are worthy of consideration in these lessons. Every Christian must use these four methods or suffer a dwarfing of his spiritual and devotional nature. These fundamentals are: (1) Secret Prayer—Talking with God, (2) Bible-study—Letting God Talk with Us, (3) Meditation—The Assimilation of Spiritual Food, and (4) Public Worship—Fellowship of the Saints.

In this third leson we will study Secret Prayer.

1. **The Importance of Prayer.** All the godly men of the Bible and of the church since the days of Christ were mighty in prayer. Abraham's intercessory prayer for the righteous of Sodom halted God in his determination to bring sudden destruction upon the wicked. Moses' plea for the children of Israel saved a nation from utter destruction. Hezekiah's prayer moved God to add fifteen years to his life. Daniel's prayer brought Gabriel from heaven to talk to him and give him a vision of the future. The most striking example of the value and power of prayer is given by our Savior. He spent whole nights in prayer, and while praying on the mountain was transfigured and conversed with Moses and Elijah, who had lived and wrought more than a millennium before. The secret of Martin Luther's power as the greatest reformer of all time lay in his prayer life. Theodorus said of him: "I overheard him in prayer. Good God, with what life and spirit did he pray! It was with so much reverence, as if he were speaking to God, yet with so much confidence, as if he were speaking with a friend." Saint Brainard's diary contained this note: "This morning spent about two hours in sacred duties [prayer], and was able more than ordinarily to agonize for immortal souls." Of Saint Brainard history says: "The effect of his preaching was that mothers hid their sons, wives their husbands, companions their friends, lest they should be led away captive by his persuasive eloquence."

We might as well try to live without eating as to try to be a devoted Christian without praying. Just as eating food is an outward expression of hunger within the body, so praying is the outward expression of the soul's hunger for the Infinite. As eating nourishing food brings to the body that which satisfies its demands, causing it to develop and grow strong, so prayer brings from God the elements that go to the

building of a strong Christian character. While prayer is the first true sign of the devotional life, it is also the means of maintaining it. If, as Paul said, "Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God," it is not possible to get on without talking to Christ with whom we are hid from the world, and to God in whom we are hid. We can not conceive of how it would be possible for two intimate friends to be hid together without talking to each other. In this condition of close association there is an inward impulse akin to hunger which impels us to pray, and a satisfaction akin to eating food which comes from prayer." To neglect prayer is to slight a supreme duty and a royal privilege."

2. **Secret Prayer.** Why does Jesus instruct his disciples to enter into the secret chamber to pray? Because the inner chamber shuts out the world, separates from the world. God, who is a spirit, hides himself from us as long as we try to see him and at the same time see the world. We must shut the world out, and then the Father will reveal himself. Carnality has always been a barrier between God and man. This secret place is symbolic of death to the world. It symbolizes a giving up of everything in the world for a vision of the Father. Do you feel weak, sinful, cold and indifferent? Your trouble is in being unduly occupied with the world. For this very reason, enter the secret chamber each day, leaving the world behind for a while. Oh, how wonderful to meet the Father as a personal Friend all alone and have a talk with him about our life problems, daily trials and besetting sins! One real experience of this kind at the beginning of each day will quicken our devotion to him and make us loyal and true throughout the day.

3. **Time for Prayer.** Paul says, "Pray without ceasing." This means we should always be looking out of the skylight. We should have all of our work so dedicated to Christ that we can, at any moment, breathe

a prayer of gratitude or supplication to him. But, aside from this, we should have a time each day to stop the routine of the day's toil to concentrate our thought and attention upon Christ and the Father. The rush and business of the world detracts from the most perfect and intimate communion. There must be a time when we stop and converse. It affords pleasure to wave our hand to a friend when passing him on the opposite side of the street, but the waving of the hand grows less pleasant from time to time unless there is frequently an opportunity to stop business and sit down together for a friendly chat.

Do I hear you say, "I do not have time for this season of secret fellowship"? Do you really think you would lose time to stop each day for a while to talk with the One who has control of time? Is it not a lack of faith in God to argue thus? Experience has taught thousands of devoted persons that fifteen minutes, or even much longer time, each day alone with God is a saving of time. Hear what Spurgeon says: "One might as well rush into the street unclothed, because he had no time to dress, or into battle unarmed, because he had no time to secure weapons, as to go forth into the experiences of the day without taking time to pray."

Evidently Spurgeon would advise us to use the first moments of the day for our secret prayer. The first moments of each day are the best, and surely the best is none too good to give to the Lord. Faith in God will prompt us to seek to converse with him early in the morning when our minds and bodies are freshest and best fitted for the greatest service of the day.

4. **The Nature of Prayer.** It is difficult to confine ourselves here to one short paragraph. However, we may be able to give a brief outline which will be suggestive and helpful. The soul of man in communion with God

is a simple definition of prayer. The fundamental elements of prayer are as follows:

(1) Adoration.—Prayer may well begin with contemplation of God which, if sincerely conducted, will lead to adoration. Any one or several of the attributes of God, such as his greatness, power, wisdom and holiness, may be reviewed in the mind and expressed in words.

(2) Confession.—A few moments of real reflection on God will drive us to reflect on ourselves by way of contrast, and then to confession of our weakness and unworthiness. Isaiah first heard the heavenly beings shouting "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts." Then he broke forth with, "Woe is me! for I am undone" (Isaiah 6: 1-5).

(3) Thanksgiving.—Before we ask God for more blessings, we should thank him for what we have already received. "Thanksgiving is the wing of prayer." Unless we recognize and appreciate what God did for us yesterday, we have no right to expect him to grant our petitions of today.

(4) Petition.—When we have exalted God by adoration, humbled ourselves by confession, appreciated the gifts of God by thanksgiving, we are in a position to come to God boldly and ask him for what we need in the promotion of his work. Our petitions need not be confined to spiritual gifts, but may include the temporal blessings as well, since all our temporal affairs have, through our devotion to Christ, been put under his control. "If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14: 14).

(5) Intercession.—Christ's example of prayer for others in his high-priestly prayer (John 17), Paul's command (1 Tim. 2: 1), and James' injunction concerning prayer for the sick (James 5: 14, 15), along with many other striking examples in the Old Testament and in the history of the church, should cause us to place more

stress upon this form of prayer than we ordinarily do. John R. Mott says concerning God's attitude toward intercessory prayer: "His mightiest works are manifested only in the pathway of unselfish and persevering intercession." It is said in the days of the Reformation in Scotland the enemies of the Protestant cause dreaded the prayers of John Knox more than they feared an army of ten thousand men.

It is not necessary that our prayer have all of these elements. But, in the summation of our prayer life, we should find all these elements in proper proportion. Neither is the order in which they come arbitrary. The circumstances under which we begin prayer will determine whether we begin with adoration, petition or any other element.

5. **Some Conditions of Prevailing Prayer.** (1) It must be in the name of Christ and in harmony with his will. "If ye ask any thing in my name, that will I do" (John 14: 14). "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15: 7). Christ can safely intrust all devoted followers of his with this great privilege of receiving what they ask, since they will not desire nor ask for anything that is not in harmony with the will of their Master. (2) It must be in faith; i. e., faith in the power of prayer. If we do not believe that prayer changes things, we may as well abandon prayer. We must also believe that God always answers prayer, if we wish to accomplish anything through prayer. God does not always give a positive answer, but no prayer goes without some sort of answer, either positive or negative. Every prayer based upon faith causes God to do something for the good of the one who prays. It may not always be exactly what we ask for, but God will see to it that what we do get is better than what we asked for. In this connection we can not refrain from calling the reader's attention to the wonderful

prayer text in Mark 11: 24. Space will not permit comment upon this text, but we suggest that you will be richly repaid for prayerfully meditating upon it. (3) Persistence is a very important condition of prevailing prayer (Luke 18: 1-8). (4) Definiteness is quite necessary to effective prayer (Matt. 7: 9-11). Some one has said, "Generalities in prayer are only a refuge for unbelief."

Test Questions

1. What are the four leading ways of giving expression to and cultivating the devotional life?
2. Name some characters of the Bible and of history who placed great stress on prayer.
3. With what function of the body may prayer be compared to show its importance?
4. Why should every Christian pray in secret?
5. Why should there be a special time for secret prayer each day?
6. What has Spurgeon said about not having time to pray?
7. Name the leading elements of prayer.
8. Give a simple definition of prayer.
9. What should cause us to place much stress upon intercessory prayer?
10. Name four leading conditions of prevailing prayer.

Lesson IV

Bible Study, a Factor in the Devotional Life

"Therefore shall ye lay up these words in your heart and soul; . . . And ye shall teach them your children, talking of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 11: 18, 19).

1. **The Value of Bible Study in the Devotional Life.** Bible study no less than prayer does a double duty. It is a means of giving expression to the soul's thirst for God, and, at the same time, a means of cultivating that inner impulse to possess God in the soul. Prayer, as we have said, is the soul of man in communion with God. In Bible study God responds to the desires of the soul as they are expressed in prayer. In this dispensation God speaks to man through the written Word. If we would know the will of God concerning us, we must get that knowledge, not through **reading** the Bible or reading comments on the Bible, but through prayful **study** of the same.

Bible study is a complement of prayer. The two together form a perfect whole. Prayer alone is like a conversation in which one person does all the talking; the other listens, but does not respond to the conversation. Such conversation is bound to become monotonous and uninteresting after a while. This is why so many people pray each day out of duty, though they have found no real and vital interest in prayer. When we give God an opportunity to respond to our prayers, through meditation on his Word, we come back to our adoration, confession, thanksgiving, petition and intercession with a relish. We then can sing from the heart:

"Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known."

Any one praying without a proportionate amount of Bible study is like a little child trying to turn the knob to the door entering the room in which mother is at work. After calling and pulling at the knob several times, the little one, being attracted by something in the dooryard, lets go of the knob and runs away to play, or to catch a passing butterfly, forgetting it wanted something from mother. Then mother, on coming to the door and finding the child gone, closes the door and returns to her work. Prayer is a time of waiting as well as knocking; a place for receiving visions as well as a place for unveiling our sorrows. Proper devotional Bible study is waiting for God to speak, waiting for a vision. It has been aptly said, "Prayer is not a venture and a voice of mine; but a vision and a voice divine." In other words, prayer is not complete until we have heard God speak through his Word.

2. **The Motive in Bible Study.** Not all Bible study produces the results of which we have been speaking. Something must be said in regard to the motive which prompts one to his Bible study. There are numerous worthy motives for study that do not yield the results we are wanting in the development of the devotional life. For instance, a minister may study a text for a sermon to present to his congregation, a teacher the lesson he wishes to teach his Sunday-school class, and even a pupil may study his lesson to recite, and none of them realize to any appreciable extent the benefits desired for the inner life of the soul. While it is a splendid thing to study to give something to others, it is altogether a different thing from studying to get something for yourself. You may, while studying for

others, get a lesson for yourself. In fact, you can not present truths to others with effect until those truths have first come home to your own soul. In this kind of study you incidentally taste a little of the food for yourself while you are preparing a dish for others. You want a whole dish for yourself every day. A taste here and there will not suffice. You may be all the while feeding others and at the same time starving yourself. A teacher and preacher needs direct visions from God's Word for his own soul, just for himself alone. This we call devotional Bible study. Perhaps Augustine's statement was not too strong when he said, "One's whole work is to heal the eyes of the heart by which he sees God." If we really see God our work for others will take care of itself.

The authority and power with which a religious worker speaks to those with whom he is working depends largely upon the reserve force which he has accumulated in his inner life through his intimate association with God. From him he receives, through the power of the Holy Spirit, a revelation of the divine will concerning himself. This reserve power, fresh and direct from God, is what caused the scribes and Pharisees to be astonished, for "he taught them as one having authority." This is what causes people to say of teachers and preachers, "He speaks from the depths of his heart." The message of such a person, whether eloquent or not, will reach the heart and accomplish its purpose.

Not only does such devotional Bible study furnish authority and power for service, but it furnishes a peace and satisfaction to one's own soul that can not be described in words. When in this condition we have "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Paul must have had some such experience when he cried out, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

3. **Time for Devotional Bible Study.** What we said about time for prayer will apply with equal force to devotional Bible study. Not a day should pass by without devoting at least a few minutes in connection with prayer in reading and meditation on a portion of God's Word. It need not be more than one verse, or phrase, or even a single word. It should be worked over in the mind until it becomes fixed so that it may be referred to frequently during the day. Every return to the passage will be a glance up through the skylight.

What we have said in this connection does not refer to family worship. That is a religious privilege and duty which every head of a family should diligently pursue, but it is separate and distinct from secret prayer and meditation. This should be done when one can be entirely alone with God. The reason for this will be more clearly presented in the next lesson on Meditation.

4. **Methods of Devotional Bible Study.** No one method can be adapted to all persons. Each one will have a method of his own suited to his own peculiar taste, temperament, training and environment. Only a few suggestions can be made which may be helpful to beginners. The model lessons to be presented in succeeding chapters will add materially to this subject.

However, it may be said here that no difference how helpful commentaries and other books about the Bible may be in a critical study, or in the preparation of the Sunday-school lesson, they should rarely, if ever, be used in devotional study. The Holy Spirit is the best Commentary for this sort of study. He will show us the truth God wants us to have at any particular time. Read and wait for the Holy Spirit to shine in your soul and reveal the message. The Holy Spirit revealed the truth in the first place to the author; he will reveal it to you in proportion to your faith. Give him a chance.

There is a satisfaction and exhilaration in discovery for one's self. In the biological laboratory the student may read a thorough description of minute forms of life, so that it appears he should know all about them. But the wide-awake, energetic, thoroughgoing student will not be satisfied until he has discovered these forms of life through diligent search by the use of the microscope. The satisfaction of this discovery is more than pay for the effort. So in the search for spiritual truth the devout Christian is richly rewarded for the patient and earnest search by the use of heaven's Microscope—the Holy Spirit. It is manyfold more beneficial and refreshing to a Christian to see a truth through the help of the Holy Spirit than through the help of a commentary. While a beginner may use a devotional commentary to get a start, it is the lazy Christian who persists in this method of search for spiritual truth. He will get a lazy man's reward.

Devotional study should always begin by an act of faith. If faith, as has been said, is the power by which we appropriate divine things, it becomes quite necessary, in coming to God for a message to your own soul, to reach out the hand of faith by which to take the message God is only too ready to give. The getting of a revelation from God always depends on us. God is always ready to give, if we are ready to receive. Faith is our receiving power. Jesus, when here in person, said to those who would be healed of a disease, "According to thy faith be it unto thee"; "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Again we read in Heb. 11: 6, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek after him."

This act of faith will take, at least, two leading forms. First, we will make a special effort to realize the Divine Presence. A splendid way to do this is to seize upon some phenomenon of nature that happens

to be protruding itself in a special manner around us at the time, and from this realize God is present. For example, we may say of the sun's rays as they fall on us at the moment of our study, "I know these rays of light are from thee, O God. Thou art as near me now as the rays of sunlight. May the warmth of thy spiritual presence be as cheering to my soul as the light of the sun is to my body." There may be many other ways of realizing God's presence. The one who has had experience in meeting God during the devotional hour will need no device of the kind mentioned. His experience with God will cause him immediately to recognize God's presence.

Second, faith will expect great things of God. William Carey, the pioneer missionary to India, said, "Expect great things of God; attempt great things for God." This has since become a missionary motto. It might with equal propriety become a Sunday-school teacher's motto when he enters upon devotional Bible study. We might well begin our devotional study with the Psalmist's prayer, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

5. **Classification of Scripture for Devotional Study.** The first question that arises in the mind after one has decided to begin a devotional study of the Bible is, "Where shall I begin?" Much depends on how we answer this question. The Bible, to a great many people, is a hard Book to understand, and so a hard Book to become interested in. The principal reason for this is wrong methods or no methods at all. There is one way that will be equally helpful and interesting to all. There are numerous methods that will arouse interest and prove valuable. But for devotional study the question of where to begin will be easily answered in a general way. We should begin with the portion that yields most readily to that kind of study. The fol-

lowing simple, rather incomplete, classification will be suggestive and helpful to beginners:

(1) Purely Devotional Portions
  (a) The Book of Psalms.
  (b) The Prayers of the Bible.
(2) Portions that Readily Yield to Devotional Study.
  (a) The Four Gospels.
  (b) The New Testament Epistles.
  (c) History and Biography.
  (d) Prophetic Books and Revelation.
(3) The Hard Portions for Devotional Study.
  (a) Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes.
  (b) Law Portions of Exodus and Numbers and the Whole of Leviticus.

Test Questions

1. What is the double duty which Bible study performs for the soul of man?
2. What is the relation of devotional Bible study to prayer?
3. What is the motive which should prompt us in devotional Bible study?
4. Upon what do the authority and power of a religious worker depend?
5. Review what was said in lesson three about time for prayer and apply it to Bible study.
6. Will any one method of Bible study be adapted to all pupils? Why?
7. Why not use commentaries and other helps in devotional Bible study?
8. How should devotional study always begin? Why?
9. What two leading forms will faith take in the devotional hour?
10. What question arises first to a beginner of devotional Bible study?
11. Classify the Scripture for devotional study.

Lesson V

Meditation, a Factor in the Devotional Life

"Oh how love I thy law!
It is my meditation all the day" (Psa. 119: 97).

"How sweet are thy words unto my taste!
Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth"
(Psa. 119: 103)!

1. **The Relation of Meditation to Prayer and Bible Study.** In the lessons on prayer and Bible study, meditation was constantly implied. It was difficult to discuss those topics without infringing on this lesson. What was said about Bible study being a complement to prayer will apply equally well to meditation. In fact, the three form a trinity of soul expression and cultivation, any member of which cannot be dropped without partially paralyzing the other two. "Meditation lets us see our wants, and prayer obtains for us relief from God. The one makes us discern the dangers that surround us; the other gives us happy escape from them. Prayer is tepid without meditation."

2. **The Need of Meditation.** The mad rush of the world for money and pleasure in this age of culture and civilization makes it imperative that the Christian stop a while each day to reflect on the road over which he has come and to plan the path he wishes to follow. In this day of automobiles, flying machines and submarines it seems to require all our time to keep the machinery going. There is no time for getting our spiritual bearing, quieting our nerves and keeping our heads cool, unless we take hold of and compel ourselves to withdraw from the rush, bustle and din of the world by entering the inner chamber where we can be for a while alone with God. In the days of ox teams

compulsion in this respect was not necessary. Then there was plenty of time for reflection. Today we move so swiftly that the changing scenes rob us of everything but superficial thought on things religious. Real meditation seems to be a "lost art."

What shall we as Christian men and women, who profess to be living for another world as well as this, do about the hour in which to ponder the great truths of life and destiny? Or have we outgrown the need for solitude where God speaks direct to the soul? The Psalmist felt the need of a revelation of God through his Word when he said, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." God answered his petition, for we hear him saying farther on in the same Psalm, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" In this age of rush, this same experience may be ours, if we are willing to pay the price. We do not yet know all there is to be known of God. He still has many wondrous things to reveal to us from his Law. As Sunday-school teachers and other religious workers, we are more in need of this heavenly vision today than ever in the history of the world. The pleasure-seeking world today needs men of heavenly vision. "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint" (Prov. 29: 18). That is just what the people of these days have done. They have cast off restraint. It stands the Christian man in hand, therefore, to see the face and hear the voice of God in order to lead the people from their wild rush after gods of gold and pleasure.

3. **The Value of Meditation in Devout Life.** The devout life is union with God in Christ. There is nothing beyond this. The closer the union the more devout the life, and whatever cultivates this union is of priceless value. Meditation is the ladder by which we climb up into this union with God. "It causes true devotion to spring up in our hearts. It is that which, next to

the grace of God, most of all warms the heart and the will, and produces the prompt disposition to do virtuous deeds."

It has often been said the Word of God is food to the spiritual man. Without it there is no development of the divine life. But it is possible for us to hear the Word in splendid sermons and read it day by day, and yet become spiritual dyspeptics, simply because we fail to digest and assimilate the truth by the process of meditation. Meditation is the means of transforming the soul's food into spiritual bone and muscle. Merely to read a passage of Scripture each day because we feel it our duty to do so, not stopping to meditate at the time of reading or calling it up at some other time of the day for meditation, is as useless as taking food into the mouth and at once spitting it out without chewing, digesting and assimilating it. Or a still more striking illustration of our spiritual lethargy would be the swallowing of our food without any effort to masticate it. Of course this would render it next to impossible for the digestive organs to perform their functions and assimilate the food for the use of the body. What is more, it would cause chronic indigestion or dyspepsia. We read a chapter in the Bible and try to swallow it at once and as a whole. The result is we become spiritual dyspeptics. The Word even becomes nauseating to us when not served in a gold dish and highly seasoned with oratory and rhetoric.

4. **The Nature of Man Demands Meditation.** Man is so constituted that he can not attain to his highest and best self; he can not exercise his heavenly nature and enter into the realms of the invisible without contemplation. Aristotle, with just a gleam of heavenly light breaking, before Christ brought the full light into the world, said, "There is one path open to the Eternal—the way of contemplation."

The mind of man is not confined to time and space

as is his body. In a twinkle it may swing to the remotest corner of the earth and occupy itself with persons and events thousands of miles beyond the sight of the physical eye or the hearing of the physical ear. I frequently catch my pupils occupying their minds with things that belong to another county or State. Our real self is our inner self, and, where the mind is, we are. The kind of associates our minds keep determines our character and our destiny. William Law says, "Meditate on great things and your soul will grow great." If our minds keep company with God the Father and Christ his Son, we will find our lives becoming images of God. If we associate in thought predominantly with things of the world, we become worldly. In other words, we become like the things upon which we meditate.

5. **The Nature of the Bible Requires Meditation.** The Bible is a mine of inexhaustible wealth. Comparatively little of the gold in a gold region lies on the surface. Great industry is required of gold seekers in mining the metal and separating it from the ore. Many thousands of men have been disappointed in their search for gold because they were not willing to dig for it, but sought it on the surface. If we would find the wealth of the Bible we must dig for it. God has arranged it so that comparatively little of its wealth lies on the surface. Being a Book of divine origin, revealing divine truth, it is infinite in its wealth of spiritual gold. Any one who is not spiritually lazy, but willing to operate on the spiritual ore of the Scripture by meditation and prayer, putting forth as much effort there as he would in getting material gold, will become rich in the gold that perisheth not. Nature gives us the crude material, but industry transforms it into that which is of service to mankind. God has given us the Bible; meditation and prayer are necessary to make it serviceable to Christian men.

God has wisely delivered his will to us in the form of principles rather than in the form of rules. If the Bible were a set of specific rules for the governing of human life, we might not need to do so much meditating, but simply follow the letter of the law. Even when rules are given, they are based on principles, and thought is required to discover the principles. Principles are eternal; rules are temporary. They are discarded when the need for them has disappeared. This is what Jesus had in mind when he said, "I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it." He did discard some of the rules of the Mosaic law, but not until he had discovered for his hearers the principles upon which they were based. The real Mosaic law was couched in the principles underlying the law. Jesus was concerned with the keeping and filling full of the part that was eternal. The sacrificial and priestly system given to Israel passed away with the sacrifice of Christ. He announced the principle underlying sacrifice when he said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." With this the rules governing animal sacrifice passed away forever. On the other hand, when a principle is given in the Bible it requires thought to formulate a rule from that principle which applies to the particular conditions of life in which we find ourselves placed.

The larger part of the Bible is made up of example rather than of precept. The narrative portion of the Bible far outweighs the law portion. This again is suggestive of the need of meditation. Out of the narratives we may glean by meditation the principles that governed the lives of the godly men whose biographies are there recorded. Like a bee going from flower to flower, sucking honey, we go from character to character, extracting the eternal truths that lie deep in their godly nature. The bee in a businesslike way buries itself in the deep cup of the flower until it

secures the drop of honey. It then hurries to another flower, and then to another until it has a load to be carried to the hive and stored away for future use. How different the butterfly! It flits lightly and beautifully among the flowers and in a haphazard manner alights here and there, accidentally finding a little of the sweet on the surface, never dreaming of the great store of honey lying at its feet. When winter comes the bee is in its warm hive, subsisting on the fruit of its summer toil. The butterfly died in the fall with the flowers. We may be either a bee or a butterfly in our Bible study. The only difference between the two is meditation.

I hear many of my readers say, "I do not know how to begin meditation on the Scripture. When I read a Bible story it seems to be plain. I am unable to find anything about which to think; or I do not understand and do not know how to go about understanding." Want of space forbids our saying anything about method here. In the model lessons given in Chapters 8, 9 and 10 we will give some helpful hints.

Test Questions

1. What relation does meditation sustain to prayer and Bible study?
2. What conditions are prevalent in the world today that destroy meditation?
3. What is the religious worker's duty in regard to meditation?
4. What comparison may be made to show the value of meditation?
5. What is the nature of man's mind that makes meditation necessary for his highest development?
6. Compare the Bible to a mine and show the lesson it teaches on meditation.

7. Which composes the larger part of the Bible, rules or principles? How does this make meditation more necessary?
8. Why do the narratives and biographies of the Bible make meditation necessary?

Lesson VI

Public Worship, a Factor in the Devotional Life

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psa. 122: 1).

"Not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another" (Heb. 10: 25).

1. **Definition.** Strictly speaking, the word "public" in the title of this lesson is uncalled for, since the word "worship" carries the idea of communion with God in the congregation. Dr. Philip Schaff defines worship as follows:

"Christian worship, or cultus, is public adoration of God in the name of Christ; the celebration of the communion of believers as a congregation with their heavenly Head, for the glory of the Lord, and for the promotion and enjoyment of spiritual life."

If we substitute the word "devotional" for the synonymous word "spiritual" in Dr. Schaff's definition, we at once see the vital relation which worship in the congregation, or public worship, sustains to the devotional life. It is for the promotion and enjoyment of the devotional life.

2. **The Social Nature of Man Requires a Social Element in His Religion.** The heart of man craves friendship and fellowship. The little child early shows its inborn social nature in its desire for playmates. A common interest, whatever it may be, naturally draws men together for conversation and social intercourse. It is as natural for man to do this as it is for him to eat. The hermit life of the early Christian era and the cloister life of the middle ages were abnormal and crushing to one of the noblest traits of man's nature.

This disposition of man's nature affords an avenue

of mutual helpfulness in every field of knowledge and culture. God has based one of the most important elements of religion upon it. Ample provision was made for it in the Jewish religion in the temple service and the great yearly festivals. In the Christian era the institution known as the church is a social institution. Each local congregation of the church is a large family. Each time they gather for worship they have a family reunion where there is the closest fellowship of kindred spirits with one another and with Christ, their Elder Brother, and God the Father of the family. Here they admonish one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts unto the Lord.

The man who says he can read a sermon at home, or read his Bible at home and worship with his family daily at the family altar, refusing on this ground to attend public worship, is deliberately dwarfing his religious life and failing to recognize God's plan for the development of his devotional nature. True devotion to God requires us to meet for communion with God's children where God has planned in a special manner to meet with them. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Every normal Christian will, like the Psalmist, say, "I was glad when they said, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Social worship and private prayer are complements one of the other. In them, two sides of our spiritual nature receive cultivation. Private devotion sends us out well prepared for public worship, and public worship sends us back to the secret chamber for fresh, more joyful and intimate communion with God. It is like the echo of a voice between two hills, which bounds back and forth from one hill to the other until it loses itself in the great open space above. Our devotions bound back and forth between the secret cham-

ber and the public assembly until they are lost in the great assembly of heaven. The man who deliberately and persistently refuses to take part in public worship, when he has the opportunity, is a man who either has dropped his private devotions or finds no longer any pleasure in them. The reverse is equally true. He who lets his secret devotions die, either goes to church in a careless, indifferent, sleepy manner, or else he does not go at all.

3. **The Several Parts of Public Worship.** There are five leading parts or elements in public worship, all of which, if properly participated in, will yield wonderful results to the devotional life.

(1) Reading the Scripture.—This is worship only when proper attention is given to the reading. This is best done with Bible in hand.

(2) Prayer.—Adoration, thanksgiving, petition and intercession constitute the leading elements of public prayer, and become worship only when we follow in thought and give assent to the audible prayer of the leader. Simply taking the bodily attitude of prayer is not worship.

(3) Preaching the Gospel.—This was a prominent feature of the early Christian assemblies, and has been maintained in one form or another through the ages from the first century of the Christian era to the present time. A whole congregation worships God in this service by giving prayerful attention to the message.

(4) Song Service.—This form of worship has been immortalized in the Psalms—the hymn book of the Jews. In this form of worship the congregation rises to the highest pitch of devotion. Jesus gave his sanction to psalmody at the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26: 30). Paul commanded the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5: 19). We lose the very best method of developing our devotional nature by sitting in a religious service without taking active

part in the song, whether we can always strike the right chord and keep the right time or not.

(5) Church Ordinances.—The ordinances which form a specific part of social or public worship are the Communion (eucharist), Lord's Supper (agape) and Feet-washing. Those ordinances are symbolic of the most important elements of religion, the richest of spiritual gifts. They bring to the sincere worshiper the largest possible spiritual grace and heavenly inspiration.

4. **Preparation for Public Worship.** This religious privilege and duty is of such vital importance to the devout Christian that he can never afford to approach it in a light or irreverent manner. A large majority of the spiritually-minded Christians have an opportunity these days to participate in the worship of the sanctuary every Sunday. Because the service is so common, it is to be feared many are unmindful of its sacredness, entering into it without due reverence. We should never enter a churchhouse for worship without preparing our hearts for the service with a secret prayer. This is highly important to receive from the service the devotional strength which God wishes to bestow.

The moments between entering the church and opening of the service should be occupied by quiet, prayerful meditation on the goodness of God or some kindred theme. We may arouse our thoughts by reading from our Bible or from the song book in the pew. It is irreverent and even sacrilegious to come into the sanctuary of the Lord in a boisterous manner and sit talking loudly concerning secular affairs while waiting for the service to begin. We should rather converse with God, preparing our minds for the worship that is to follow.

5. **The Proper Spirit in Public Worship.** What has been said in the preceding paragraph about preparation for worship suggests the spirit which should pervade our hearts and minds during the whole service.

Everything depends on this. Our devotional life either grows stronger or weaker by each service we attend. Whether we gain or lose depends entirely upon the attitude which we take toward every part of the service.

In the first place, every properly-conducted service has in it no superfluities. Every part is necessary and important to the spiritual uplift of the worshiper. The worshiper should, therefore, take active part in every portion of the service. What do we mean by taking part? We mean that the mind should be withdrawn from everything except the particular service in progress at the time. The very first song should be entered into with interest and enthusiasm. We should sing with the thought conveyed by the words of the song in mind, making them a prayer of our own soul; or as Paul says, "singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." When the Scripture is read, we should be in a frame of mind to appreciate the message; when the prayer is offered, we should kneel, unless otherwise directed by the leader, close our eyes and give assent to the audible prayer. We should never gaze about the room during prayer. No one, having his eyes open, can enter with the proper spirit into public prayer. The eyes should always be closed to help shut out of the mind everything except the thought of the prayer. While the preaching is going on closest attention should be given to the sermon, with a decided effort to get a message from God for your own soul and not for the soul of some one else.

In a religious service the devout Christian reduces the spirit of criticism to a minimum. Nothing kills worship so quickly and so thoroughly destroys the virility of devotion as the spirit of criticism. Some people on returning home from worship have nothing left in mind except the mistakes in grammar and rhetoric and the minister's errors in theology in some part of the service. These people are more lean of soul after

than before church. It is true we can not help noticing errors, and to some extent being influenced by them, but they should not take the preëminence in the mind over the message. We should minimize the mistakes and magnify the message.

Well-meaning young people are sometimes so thoughtless about the welfare of their own spiritual life and the spiritual life of others as to visit, laugh and talk during the service in the sanctuary. It seems scarcely necessary to remark that such proceedings at church are ruinous to devotional life. One can never participate in such conduct without chilling his religious life and robbing himself of the real joy of his religion.

Test Questions

1. Define worship.
2. What provision did God make for the social nature of man in the days of Israel?
3. What provision did God make in the Christian era?
4. In what respect are a church and a family similar? What bearing does this comparison have on the subject in hand?
5. What will persistent refusal to attend public worship do for one's devotional life?
6. What is the special promise to those who meet in the Lord's name?
7. What is the relation of social worship to private prayer?
8. Name the five leading parts of public worship?
9. What preparation is necessary for acceptable public worship?
10. What are some of the things we should do in public worship to get the best spiritual results?
11. What are some of the things we should not do in public worship?

Lesson VII

The Holy Spirit's Part in the Devotional Life

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world can not receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14: 16, 17).

We have now studied the four fundamental means on our part of expressing and cultivating the devotional life. In this lesson we shall learn something about God's part in each of these four devotional activities.

1. **The Dispensation of the Holy Spirit.** Just as the Son of God made his advent into the world at his nativity, so the Holy Spirit made his advent into the world at Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2: 28). Stephen, in his defense before the Jewish authorities, applies the words of Joel to this dispensation, sometimes called the dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

Both the Son of God and the Spirit of God were associated with God in his dealings with men in the dispensation preceding Christ; but, in the nativity, the Son of God performed a definite and specific work for the human race, becoming the Savior of the world by representing God in the world in the form of man. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit also began a definite and specific work in the world by entering into man to represent in his life the life of the Christ

(John 15: 26). The great mission of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation is to reveal Christ to us, his disciples, and to lead us to a clear understanding of the significance of Christ's incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension and personal return to the earth. It requires only a superficial study of the Gospels and Acts to reveal the fact that the whole scheme of redemption would have been very incomplete without the gift of the Holy Spirit. In fact, we would today be utterly unable to comprehend and apply the atonement of Christ without the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. The twelve apostles were blind to the great truths of the Gospel until after the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It was then that Christ's promise was fulfilled to them: "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14: 26). This promise is being marvelously realized in the lives of devout Christians today.

We will now study the part the Holy Spirit plays in Prayer, Bible Study, Meditation and Public Worship.

2. **The Holy Spirit and Prayer.** "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered" (Rom. 8: 26). From this scripture we learn a very vital fact about the Holy Spirit's part in prayer. We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness by interceding for us. He does this in our heart at the same time that Christ is interceding for us before the throne of God. (See 1 John 2: 1; Heb. 7: 25.) The groans coming from the heart and finding no language to express adequately their deep seated meaning, are born of the Spirit and fully understood by the Father. So, by the help of the Spirit, we get the inspired longings

of the soul, too profound for mortal tongue to utter, adequately unfolded before God.

Paul speaks of praying at all seasons in the Spirit (Eph. 6: 18). If we may pray in the Spirit, then we may be guided by the Spirit in our secret prayer. He will teach us what adoration and thanksgiving to render; what confessions, petitions and supplications to make. If our prayers are made under the guiding of the Spirit of God, God is bound to hear and answer, for the prayer is the work of his own Spirit, and must be in harmony with his will. The extent, then, that we are under the influence of the Holy Spirit will be the exact measure of the power we have in prayer. Living in the Spirit fits us for prevailing prayer.

3. **The Holy Spirit and Bible Study.** "He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16: 14). The great purpose of the Scripture is to bring us to Christ and through Christ to God. One of the great offices of the Holy Spirit is to take the Scriptures, which tell of Christ, and unfold them to us. He directed the writing of the Scriptures, so is the best One to interpret the same to us. "Even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given us of God" (1 Cor. 2: 11, 12).

In the study of nature we are unable to get very far without the use of the microscope and telescope. A world of infinite beauty and wonder lies around about us, and even in us, which can not be known at all through the naked eye. The microscope reveals myriads of minute living creatures outside of the range of our vision. The telescope reveals myriads of worlds larger than our own, lying in realms too remote for the naked eye. The Holy Spirit serves as microscope and telescope to the devotional eye in search for spir-

itual truth. A world of heavenly and wondrous beauty is thus revealed to one who will make use of the instrument God has provided for all truth seekers. "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2: 9, 10). John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day (Rev. 1: 10) and saw the wonderful things recorded in the Book of Revelation.

The only textbook for devotional study is the Bible, and the only commentary is the Holy Spirit. There are many valuable books on the devotional life which may be read with very great profit in getting started in devotional meditation, but they are valuable only as they are based on the Scripture and are inspired by the Spirit of God. The real Book back of these books must be the Bible. There are many books of biblical interpretation which throw valuable light on the Bible. Such books have their place. However, this reflected light does not illuminate the heart as much as it does the head. There is a vast flood of knowledge coming from books about the Bible, and valuable enough for certain purposes, but it is not the material out of which spiritual life is built. Spiritual life is direct from God. The Spirit of God will take the things of Christ and reveal them to us, so that by faith we may appropriate them to our own selves, transforming them into spiritual life and power. This is why the psalmist prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

"Come, Holy Ghost, for, moved by thee,
The prophets wrote and spoke;
Unlock the truth, thyself the key,
Unseal the Sacred Book."

4. The Holy Spirit and Meditation. Do I hear some one say, "If the Holy Spirit dwells in me, and is in possession of all spiritual knowledge, why is it necessary to meditate on God's Word? Why does not the Spirit unfold to me the truth at once? Why do I have to work so hard and wait so long to get the heavenly message? If God wants me to have it, why does he not give it to me at once?" Two things must be said in answer to these questions.

First, as has been said in these lessons, faith is the power by which we appropriate all God's gifts to us. We must take hold of the truth by faith, and manifest that faith by stepping out on God's promises. In proportion as we manifest faith in God by going to his Word, meditating on it and expecting to receive from him, will the Holy Spirit reveal to us the invisible things of God that make for a life of devotion and power for service.

Second, the Holy Spirit does not work in us independent of our powers. He works through our powers. We never need to sit down and expect the Spirit to work for us a miracle when the power to do the thing to be done is within us. In the unfolding of truth from the Bible, the Holy Spirit uses our reason, memory, imagination and other powers of the mind to bring to us heavenly visions. By spiritual meditation we swing into operation all the powers of the mind under the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit. We do not mean to say the Holy Spirit will not work miracles in our lives. But the miracle will be wrought only after our own powers have been exhausted and our faith carries us on beyond the realm of the natural into the realm of the supernatural. Then we may stand transfixed before God, and behold him doing the impossible.

Right here we may pause to remark again that a commentary may bring to us new truth, but not truth appropriated by faith. Faith in a commentary will

bring truth to the head by the power of the understanding, but only faith in God will bring, by the power of the Spirit, truth to the heart, thereby producing the devout life. We may use the commentaries for critical study of the Bible, but not for devotional study.

5. **The Holy Spirit and Public Worship.** The experience of the disciples on the day of Pentecost is sufficient evidence of the mighty working of the Holy Spirit in a group of united worshipers. "These all with one accord continued steadfast in prayer." "They were all together in one place." "But ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you." These references taken from the first chapter of Acts refer to incidents just preceding the day of Pentecost. The second chapter of Acts describes the events of Pentecost, at which time the Spirit takes a prominent part in the affairs of the apostles. "And suddenly there came from heaven a sound . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Each one of the company of 120 was filled with the Spirit. Each one took part as he was directed by the Spirit. Thus Peter was led to deliver a great revival sermon, through the truth of which three thousand souls were converted.

Perhaps if we could allow the Spirit a little more liberty in our public services we would realize better results. The formality of a service frequently quenches the work of the Spirit in the service. At least, there should be one service each week in every congregation at which the Spirit has perfect liberty in the order of the service. This meeting may be the prayer meeting. However, in a formal service of song, Scripture reading, prayer and preaching, the Holy Spirit fills and guides each worshiper who would secure devotional benefit from the service. In proportion as we are under the influence of the Spirit in public worship, whether as

hearer or speaker, do we get the spiritual benefit that public worship should bring to us.

Test Questions

1. What is meant by the dispensation of the Holy Spirit?
2. When did the Holy Spirit begin a special work in the world?
3. What does the Holy Spirit do for one who is weak in prayer?
4. How may we know what to ask God for in prayer? What will be the result when we ask in the proper way?
5. Who is the greatest Interpreter of the Scriptures for devotional purposes? Why?
6. Why are commentaries not good interpreters for devotional Bible study?
7. What two reasons may be given for meditation in connection with the work of the Spirit?
8. What is the greatest example in the Bible of the work of the Spirit in public worship?
9. What is necessary in public worship to secure devotional benefit?

Lesson VIII

A Model Lesson in Devotional Bible Study from the Psalms

After what has been said about the importance of Devotional Bible Study in Lesson 4, it is to be hoped many Sunday-school teachers and Christian workers will want to begin such study. But our advice against the use of commentaries in this work may cause some to despair of attempting it, not knowing at all how to begin. We shall, therefore, devote the last three lessons to some suggestive methods of study. Bear in mind, however, these lessons are only suggestive. They should not be arbitrarily followed by any one. Each one should finally develop a method of his own.

Equipment. Before beginning you should supply yourself with an American Revised Bible. Of course this will not be absolutely necessary, but will be a valuable help. You can not do your best work without three other books; viz., Concordance, Subject Index and Notebook. With this equipment you are ready to select the scripture for the first lesson.

1. **Selection of Scripture.** In harmony with previous instruction you should select the passage that yields most readily to this kind of study. What portion of the Bible would that be? Which one of the one hundred and fifty Psalms would you select? Should your selection be a long or a short Psalm? Why not take the first one? Maybe that is too familiar. You may know that by heart and understand it quite well. So much the better. That will be the very one with which to begin. Now see what the Lord has to say to you through this Psalm.

2. **Exercise of Faith.** O Lord, I want to know more of thy will concerning me. I want to see some beauty and have more real joy in service. I believe thou art

able and willing to give me a larger vision in this respect. Thou hast promised to take the things of Christ and show them to me (John 16: 14, 15). I believe thy promise. Help thou my unbelief.

3. **Reading the Scripture.** A prayer similar to this and you are ready to read attentively through the Psalm, expecting the Holy Spirit to impress you with the particular part of the Psalm in which the message for your soul is to be found. If you are not impressed to stop and meditate on any specific portion at the first reading, read again and again until you are led to stop for meditation on some word, phrase, clause, verse or paragraph. In case you are then not impressed with any one portion select a verse at random. We will suppose the Spirit has led you to decide on the first verse.

4. **The Meditation.** A perfect devotional meditation will bring into action, so far as it is possible, the three great faculties of the mind; viz., intellect, sensibility and will. The particular powers of the intellect that will be active are reason, memory and imagination. Under the head of sensibility, affections will be most active. The will then resolves to do, and the meditation is brought to a successful close.

You may profitably begin in this case with **memory.** Do you recall any other place in the Bible where the word "blessed" is used to begin an important passage? If your memory does not serve you after due effort do not give up easily. Remember you have a promise here (John 14: 26). Turn to your concordance and find where the word "blessed" is used to begin the most important sermon ever delivered. Look up the word "blessed" in several other Psalms, particularly in the Psalm that says a man is blessed when he has his transgressions forgiven. What Psalm is this? Find it and read the first two verses. In your notebook make a list of things that enter into the making up of a blessed

life. Do not forget the points mentioned in the first Psalm. Can you stop with the first verse of this Psalm in making out your list? Will you not need to include verse two also?

Now you may bring **reason** into action. In your list of things that constitute blessedness, are there any worldly items, or are they all of a spiritual nature? If they are all spiritual, do you conclude the word "blessed" is a word that ever is properly used to describe purely worldly experiences? Can you find in your own life or the life of others any purely earthly pleasures that you can properly designate as blessed? In your memory work did you recall the verse in Revelation which says, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord"? If the dead in the Lord are blessed, and the living in the Lord are blessed, what do you conclude about the relation that heaven sustains to those on earth who are in the Lord? Do such passages as Eph. 1: 3, 2: 6 throw any light on the last question? If these last two questions do not open up to you at once, do not hurry away. Stay here and ask God to light up your heart by the power of the Spirit and show you the great truth. It should be a refreshing message to your soul. It may be the vision the Holy Spirit wishes, above every other, to show you in this meditation. If you get it, it will deepen, widen and heighten your devotional life. Write it out fully in your notebook.

Let us see now whether we may be able to bring the **imagination** into play. Think of yourself sitting in company with ten thousand people, each one of whom is rich with the experience of heaven here on earth because he has met the requirements of the blessed life. In what would such a company most likely be engaged? Can you compare this imaginative experience with the one described in Rev. 15; 2-4? You can stay here a long time with profit. I might ask you to describe

this imaginative scene in your notebook, but I fear you would have some such experiences as the man referred to in 2 Cor. 12: 4.

By this time your **love (affections)** to God will have been awakened, and you will spontaneously cry out to God in language similar to this:

"Almighty Father, God of heaven and earth, I adore thee for this wonderful vision which thou hast given me. I have seen heaven brought down to earth through the power of thy Spirit. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless his holy name.'"

You will naturally close this study with an exercise of the **will.** To go away from such an experience without resolving anew to make an effort to weave into your life all of the graces recorded in your notebook as necessary for the blessed life, would be to miss the whole point of the lesson. The sermon which you have preached to your own soul, as is so often the case of sermons, would be wasted. You would have quenched the Spirit; and he would not soon show you such a vision again without the exercise of more faith, determination and perseverance. In other words you would have taken a step backwards in your devotional life instead of a step forward.

5. **Concluding Remarks.** The great truth learned in this lesson should be memorized, and recalled to mind many times during the day. When there is a moment's pause in your daily toil, run in mind to this heavenly vision and bathe your soul in its sacred and inspiring light. "It should be like a fragrant flower, plucked from the garden and woven in the girdle, whose odor refreshes us amid the dust and turmoil of life."

I hear you say, "I thought we were going to study the whole Psalm, and here we have studied only one word of that Psalm. We have not done much, and yet we have been here a long time." Well, we have let the Spirit guide us, and what the Spirit,

as a Teacher, does is done right. We have had a message from God, and that is what we started after. Should we not be satisfied when we get the gem we started to find, whether we exhausted the mine or not? Is it not better to have allowed the Spirit to take us direct to the nugget than to have dug up the whole mine and found nothing worth while? To be sure, the mine is a rich one, containing much more gold than we have found, but it requires an experienced miner to find it. The Holy Spirit has had wide experience (1 Cor. 2: 9, 10). We would better go along with the Spirit, even if he should lead us entirely away from the place at which we first started. He knows better than we where the message we are needing may be found.

If you are devoting only fifteen minutes each day to this study, I am aware of the fact that you can not complete the lesson on this one word at one sitting. You may have to come back to it a number of times before you will complete the lesson and get the message. The lesson is intended to occupy at least an hour for its study. Do not become discouraged if you do not get a message every day at first. Even if you do not get much from following this lesson, do not give up. Try, try again. Finally you will begin to see the light and be drawn towards it as a flower is drawn to the light that beams through the window of the room in which it is growing.

You see the first Psalm might furnish material for many weeks of study. The expression, "Walketh not in the counsel of the wicked," may be studied almost precisely the same way as the word "blessed," with results equally as gratifying. It is not always good for a beginner to stay too long at any one Psalm. One lesson from each of one hundred and fifty Psalms will be better than one hundred and fifty lessons from one Psalm. You will feel that you are accomplishing something by going through the Psalms, or, at least, a num-

ber of them, getting one lesson from each. Every Psalm thus studied will become precious to you.

Your devotional study of the Psalms will become more easy and fruitful as you add to your devotional study a historical and systematic study. By this I mean a study which will answer such questions as these: "When and by whom was the Psalm written?" "What was the occasion of its writing?" "What the purpose?" "What are the natural divisions of the Psalm, and what thought does the author wish to convey in each division?" "What is the theme?" When this kind of study precedes devotional study, it furnishes an array of facts which enlarges the field in which the mind may work and draw its spiritual lessons.

In closing this lesson, let me urge you again not to become discouraged if you do not succeed in getting the results expected at first. You may fail time after time, but if you persist the results will be even more than you expected. You would not hope to learn to play the piano having taken only one lesson. It requires months of patient practice. The same determination that succeeds in music will succeed in devotional Bible study.

Lesson IX

A Model Lesson in Devotional Bible Study from the Prayers of the Bible

The Prayers of the Bible and How to Find Them. Do you know how many prayers there are in the Bible? Do you know how many there are to which answers are attached? Would you be surprised if I were to tell you there are at least thirty-three prayers with definite recorded answers? Are you asking how to find out where these prayers may be found? There are two ways to find out; one a long and laborious way, the other a short and easy way.

(1) You may read the Bible through with the express purpose of finding all the prayers with answers. Take a new Bible, or any unmarked Bible, and when you find a prayer underscore it with a red pencil. The answer, if recorded, may be underscored with a blue pencil. It would add to the interest of the work to put a cross of red at the beginning of all private prayers and a cross of blue at the beginning of all public prayers There are a few prayers of the Bible to which are attached a refusal from God to grant the request. These are negative answers. You might underscore these with black.

If you decide to read your Bible through with reference to the prayers, you will find it profitable to keep a notebook and record a name or title for each prayer, and some of the best thoughts that present themselves to your mind. Taking for an example a prayer found in the first book of the Bible, a page in your notebook might appear as follows:

Abraham's Prayer for Ishmael (Gen. 17: 18)

1. A private prayer.
2. An intercessory prayer.

3. A short prayer—only seven words.
4. A prayer that affected two races of people—the Israelites and the Ishmaelites—and through the Israelites all Christian people of this dispensation.
5. A prayer with a double answer—a negative and a positive answer (Gen. 17: 19, 20). The negative answer carries with it the great spiritual benefit to come to the race through a covenant, the import of which was not grasped by Abraham. The positive answer was temporal in its import, and was a partial gratification of Abraham's desire for the son born of a slave woman.

This is sufficient to give you a start with your notebook. Leave a blank page in connection with each prayer. We have not exhausted the great truths that may be drawn from the prayer just considered, and you will not exhaust any one of them by your first effort. Leave room to add new material later. Remember, we are not referring to this prayer as the model for this lesson, but are only suggesting an interesting method of finding the prayers of the Bible and keeping a notebook in connection with it.

(2) Another way to find the answered prayers of the Bible would be to take your Topical Text Book (Torrey's New Topical Text Book, put out by the Gish Fund, is splendid), and look under the head "Prayers, Answers to." You will find it the work of only a few minutes to count the number of answered prayers of the Bible.

For our model lesson may we select Moses' Intercessory Prayer, found in Ex. 32: 11-14.

1. **The Exercise of Faith.** (Let us suppose a refreshing shower of rain is falling while you study this lesson.) Almighty God, the One who has forever had control of the elements of nature, into thy presence I come to adore thee, and enter into close communion

with thee in the secret chamber. I believe thou art sending the gentle showers to refresh the earth. Wilt thou now send the gentle influences of thy Spirit to refresh my soul. I believe, O Lord, thou will keep thy promise to send gracious power and comforting influence into my heart for this hour of devotion. Increase my faith, Lord. Amen!

2. **Reading the Scripture.** Read the prayer indicated above as our lesson. Do you need to read more than the prayer? Would the context help you to appreciate the real force of the prayer? Read from the beginning of the chapter to the end of the prayer. After reading it over until you have in mind the setting of the prayer, read and reread the prayer itself until you become quite familiar with its contents.

3. **The Meditation.** Referring to Lesson III, which one of the elements of prayer is used exclusively in this prayer? What kind of prayer would you say this is? You would not call it a Thanksgiving Prayer, would you? What is the one thing that Moses asks of the Lord? Find the sentence which expresses this desire of Moses most clearly. Write it in your notebook. Commit it to memory. Does Moses argue with the Lord? If so, write out all the arguments in your notebook, numbering them one, two, three, etc. Was there anything in what God said to Moses which put his character to a crucial test? If Moses had had one grain of selfishness in him, what would he have done under these circumstances? You have now reasoned or thought through to the great truth which may form the message which the Spirit wishes you to have for your own life.

Can you recall any Bible characters who went down to ruin on this point of choosing between self and others? Give plenty of time here for memory to do its work. Make a list in your notebook of such characters. If, after you have tried to recall such Bible

characters, you fail (do not give up soon. Remember the promise of John 14: 26), turn to your Subject Index and note the examples under the head of "Selfishness." Study these examples. Do not hurry. Take a number of days for this lesson, if necessary. Recall some of the sayings of Jesus on this point; also several examples of unselfishness in his life. This line of study might be carried on to the life of the apostles. Let the Spirit lead you as to the amount of work you do on the lesson. Stop before monotony sets in.

Imagine yourself in a position similar to that of Moses. Try to think of a situation for yourself in which the same principle is involved. Modernize it and make it as real as you can for yourself. Then ask yourself what you would do under these circumstances. Be honest with yourself and the Lord. What is your motive in teaching (leading) a class of children? Is it for self-glory or the glory of the Lord? Read again the first part of verse 12 of Moses' prayer. If the Lord would raise up another leader for the class, and you should be unceremoniously dropped, how would you act? Would your character stand the test with that of Moses? Could you sacrifice a seeming opportunity for fame to save the reputation of God in the sight of the people (Egyptians) as did Moses? Are you supremely concerned about the Lord's work as it is being carried on by his church? Are you willing to sacrifice something that is dear to your heart to keep the Lord's work from falling into reproach in the sight of the world? Do you pray for the church, and do you think such prayer will accomplish anything for the Lord? Did it in the days of Moses?

Heavenly Father, I come so far short of the ideal set by Moses in his most wonderful intercessory prayer, that I feel unworthy to call upon thee. But thou dost love thy children, though they are weak and faltering, and art willing to hear and answer the prayers of the

most unworthy child. I long, dear Master, t be unselfish in my service and to be willing to sacrifice my own selfish interest for the good of thy cause and thy people. By thy grace I am now resolved to surrender my all to thee. Here I am, Lord. "I'll go where you want me to go, I'll be what you want me to be."

If you have conscientiously followed this lesson through, answering all the questions in the affirmative and making resolutions similar to the ones indicated in the above prayer, you have put yourself in a position to be used of the Lord to do the "greater work" referred to by Jesus in John 14: 12. You are in a position to live the miracle life. You may have miraculous victories over sin and miraculous answers to prayers. Sins with which you have struggled and over which you have prayed for years may now be overcome. You may now submit your fight to Christ and let him win the victory for you. He will do it, for now you have yielded to him. He is now and ever has been willing, but, until now, you have limited him in his power over your life. He has always said, "Be it unto you according to your faith." Your faith, however, has always been too small to make a complete surrender to him as your Master. Now you may rise and go forth to your work with full confidence of success.

If Moses had yielded to the desire to become head of a great nation, as suggested by God, it is doubtful whether we would have his name preserved to us in the history of a chosen race. His descendants would, in all probability, have been as stiffnecked as the descendants of Jacob. But Moses had that element of character which made Jesus the Redeemer of the world —the element of self-sacrifice. God could work through him to redeem this stiffnecked race. Without this prayer of Moses God could not have saved Israel from destruction and led them into the promised land. If you are able to make a prayer like that of Moses, in

which you as a teacher sacrifice yourself for your class, or you as a minister sacrifice yourself for your congregation, God can redeem your class or your congregation. God needs redeemers everywhere. Through their sacrifice he wants to save the world.

The question is often asked, "Is God changed by prayer?" Moses' prayer should forever answer that question. If we believed God is not changed by prayer, we would soon cease praying. The heart of prayer is taken from it unless we know God can be moved to do what he would not otherwise do. But God, in the case of Moses, was not led to repent simply because of the prayer. The life of a human being had to be surrendered in order to make the prayer effective. Right here lies the heart of the philosophy of prayer. God is moved this way or that way by our prayers, in so far as we yield ourselves as instruments in his hands to produce the end sought by the prayer.

Before closing this lesson let me caution you not to become unduly exercised over hard problems in your devotional study. Be content to leave some mysteries unsolved. You can come back sometime later, when you have grown more mature, and solve some of the knotty problems. Some of them you may never be able to solve this side of the place where we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known. An example of this may be found in the prayer we have been studying. How can God repent? You may have to pass over that point for the present.

Lesson X

A Model Lesson in Devotional Bible Study from the Gospels

1. **The Relation of the Gospels to the Devotional Life.** By way of introduction to our model lesson from the Gospels, it may be well to consider at some length the relation of the Gospels to the devotional life. Although we have given the Psalms and the prayers of the Bible first place, so far as their purely devotional character is concerned, we must remember the Gospels occupy preëminently the first place so far as importance to devotional life is concerned. "No subject of Bible study is more vital, fruitful or popular than the life and teachings of our Lord."

Through the Gospels we become acquainted with Christ. In fact, the great purpose of the Gospels is to bring us into close fellowship with Christ, not only as a Teacher and Lawgiver, but primarily into close contact with the PERSON of Christ. This personal acquaintance with him is the key to the devout life. We may realize the presence of the living Christ in our lives with just as much vividness as we realize the presence of a human friend. In fact, we may get into closer touch with Christ than did his disciples who were with him in the flesh. The flesh was a barrier between Christ and his disciples. The flesh has always been a barrier between man and God, between humanity and divinity. The disciples never, while Christ was in the flesh, got away from the idea that he was to be a temporal King. Even after his resurrection they asked him, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" It was only after the ascension of Christ and the advent of the Holy Spirit that they realized the spiritual nature of the kingdom Christ came to establish.

The promise Christ gave his disciples just before the ascension, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28: 20), is no figure of speech. It is a reality—more real because it is in the realm of spirit. The sooner we learn that the real things of life are in the realm of the invisible and spiritual, the more rapidly will we develop in the devotional life. The realization of the reality of Christ's promise to be with us, and the establishing of a close personal friendship and union with him will bring us beautifully into the growing, powerful, victorious, fruit-bearing, joyous life, which is the devout life.

In a devotional study of the life of Christ there are three paths open to us. They are the study of the person of Christ, the works of Christ and the teachings of Christ. We may follow these one at a time, or we may have all in mind in each lesson. We think it preferable to study one at a time, and begin with the person of Christ. Men do not readily become devoted to principles, doctrines and opinions abstracted from the person in whom they originated or by whom they are propagated. Men, as a rule, do not love abstractions. It is personality that engages their affections.

The great object of the Gospels, then, is to present to our hearts a Person who shall engage our whole affection. This Person is One who has combined in himself all the graces of both human and divine character, the One altogether lovely. On the divine character of Christ we can not refrain from quoting Dr. Horace Bushnell. He says:

"He grows sacred, peculiar, wonderful, divine as acquaintance reveals him. At first he is only a Man, as the senses report him to be; knowledge, observation, familiarity raises him into the God-man. He grows pure and perfect, more than mortal in wisdom, a Being enveloped in sacred mystery, a Friend to be loved in awe—dies into awe, and a sorrow that contains the

element of worship. . . . He is a Lamb in innocence, a God in dignity; revealing an impenitent but faultless piety, such as no mortal ever attempted, such as to the highest of mortals is inherently impossible. . . . Finally, to sum up all in one, he grows more great and wise and sacred, the more he is known—needs, in fact, to be known to have his perfection seen."

Isaiah with inspired vision calls him, "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9: 8).

We must remember, however, that, although Christ was divine in the fullest sense, he was also, in a real and perfect sense, human—the Son of Man. He was tempted in all points like as we are. The fact that he was divine made him none the less human. We are apt to think it was easy for him to do right because he had at his command divine power. He never used his divine power for himself. He voluntarily laid it all aside with reference to himself. This made it harder for him to resist temptation and endure trials than it is for us. He knew at any moment that he had divine power with which to overcome, but he, of his own free will, laid it aside to win his victories in the same way that all humanity must win. (See Matt. 26: 53.)

Once we have our affections set upon this divine-human Person, he will influence our wills, and through our wills our whole conduct in life. The fundamental point, then, in our devotional study of the Gospels is really to learn to know Christ in person. The scheme for redeeming man and making him holy lies not in a philosophy which appeals to reason, nor in poetry which appeals to imagination, but in the person of Christ who appeals to affections. Christ himself summed up the whole duty of man in love.

In our study of the person of Christ we should keep in mind his twofold nature, as Son of God and Son of Man. As Son of God, he is the Revelation of God to

us; as Son of Man, he is the Ideal of humanity. Both of these are important to us. We need to know how God feels toward us and how he deals with us. This twofold nature of Christ will be the objective point of our lesson.

1. **Selection of Scripture.** If you should decide to commence devotional study in the Gospels, where would you begin? Would you pick at random passages for study, or would you start with the first chapter of the first Gospel? It would seem best to begin at the beginning and read through the Gospels, making a note of every phase of the life of Christ that brings him into the sphere of your own life, and relates him to your peculiar needs.

The temptation of Christ (Matt. 4: 1-11) seems best fitted for a model lesson. Let us try it.

2. **The Act of Faith.** Dear Master, teach me to pray as thou didst teach thy disciples to pray. Teach me to know thee more perfectly and to trust thee more implicitly. Thou hast promised to be with me by thy Spirit, and through him to teach and guide. I believe thy promise, Lord Jesus. Help thou my unbelief.

3. **The Scripture Reading.** Read slowly through the eleven verses several times, so as to get all the facts before your mind. Read what took place just before the temptation. Is the temptation recorded by any other of the Gospels? If so, read what each one says and compare the facts as found in the one with those found in the other. Is there any difference in the order of events? Read and reread each account until you have the facts arranged in a vivid picture before your mind. Not until you have mastered the facts and gotten their setting are you ready for the meditation.

4. **The Meditation.** Remember what you are looking for in this study. It is not the teaching, nor the works, but the nature of the person of Christ. You want to see the great character. What elements of character

can you discover in this crucial event in his life? In the first place, what great experience did he just have? With whom did he have this experience? In the temptation with whom did he have a great experience? He meets, in rapid succession at the beginning of his life work, the two great powers of the universe, the good and the evil. Is this a normal human experience? I mean, is it usual for Satan to attack a man shortly after a mountain-top experience with God? Was Jesus' experience in this respect the same as ours may be? Can you recall in the history of Israel or in your own life a case similar to this in which Satan followed close upon the beneficent work of God?

Who took the initiative in the temptation, Satan, Jesus or the Holy Spirit? In other words, who led or drove Jesus into the way of temptation? Is Jesus, in this respect, different from other men, or may the Holy Spirit lead us into the place of temptation? Think of the Lord's prayer in answer to this question. Notice that, through the Spirit's initiative and guiding, Jesus chose the time and place for a battle with Satan. Jesus fortified himself on a battleground of his own choosing. Through the Holy Spirit he took the initiative. This is always the first step toward a victory over Satan. Ask yourself whether you, under the guiding of the Spirit, may not do the same thing, and thereby steal a march on Satan. If you win a few objective points—in the case of Christ, they were three, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life—you have Satan on the run. You have the offensive; Satan the defensive. He will surprise you here and there and harass you throughout life, but you will be able to meet him at every turn after you have won the three objective points.

In the first temptation, what is the crucial point? Is Satan trying to get Jesus to use his divine power to supply his own needs? If Jesus had used his divine

power here and worked a miracle for himself, what would have been the result? Would his victory over temptation have been unlike ours? Would this have placed him above us in the matter of withstanding temptation? Would he have been truly human in his temptation? Could the author of the book of Hebrews then have said what he did in Heb. 4: 15? Does Jesus meet the temptation as God or as Man? Is it possible for us to meet the tempter and foil his attack in the same way as did Jesus?

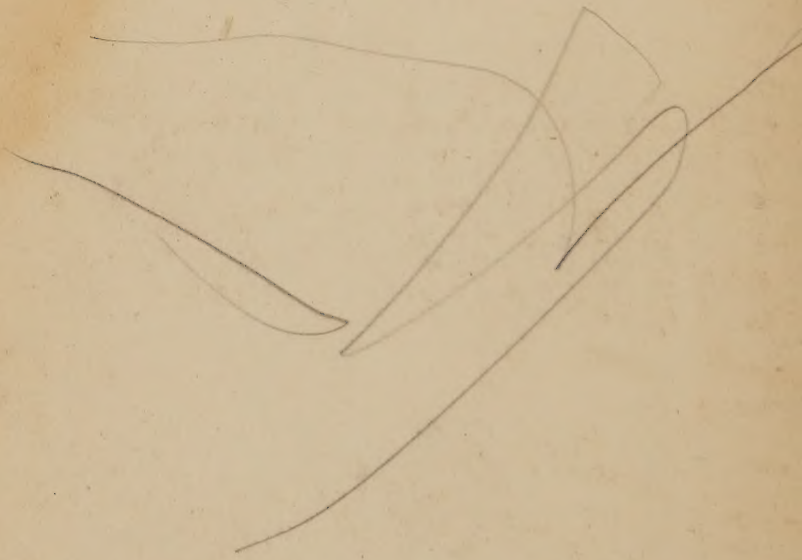
In the second temptation (according to Matthew's account), what is the crucial point? In what respects is it similar to the first one? Imagine the city of Jerusalem filled with people at the time of a Jewish festival, and Jesus previously concealed on top of the temple. In the midst of the most sacred part of the worship he leaps from the temple and by use of his divine power is preserved from injury. What would the people, who were expecting the miraculous coming of the Messiah, have done? Would Jesus suddenly have become the popular Leader of the people? Does Satan suggest that this would be an easy, quick and popular method of entering upon his Messianic work? Again, what would have been the result of such action? Would it have been the same as in the case of the first temptation? Does Jesus meet this attack as God or as Man? Does he still stay in the sphere of the human?

Now go through with the third temptation in much the same manner as you have the other two. Then come to a final conclusion whether Jesus won the whole fight as Son of God or as Son of Man. If he won it as Son of Man, he did it in the same manner that we must win over the powers of evil. He did it through the power of the Holy Spirit which came upon him at the time of baptism. He did it by the use of divine power, but the same divine power—not supernatural power—that you and I may have at our command in

time of every temptation. Under such circumstances victory will always be ours. If we run headlong into temptation on our own initiative, or let Satan surprise us on his own battle-field, we are sure to be in a losing battle.

If you wish, you may lengthen this study by asking yourself the question whether Jesus was ever tempted again after this crucial test. (See Luke 4: 13.) If he was tempted again, did he win as Son of God or as Son of Man? You may study Matt. 16: 23, John 6: 15 and Luke 22: 36-46.

5. **Expression of Loving Gratitude.** O blessed Master, I thank thee that thou didst voluntarily enter fully into the life and experiences of humanity; that thou didst spurn the solicitations of Satan to use thy divine power to gratify the appetites and desires of thy human nature. I thank thee that thou, having won the victory over sin and Satan through the power of the Spirit, art "able to succor them that are tempted."

6. **Resolution.** By thy grace, O God, I shall let thy Son, Jesus Christ, enter into my life and take such complete control that he can win for me, and give to me the victory in every temptation. "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith"—faith in the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

These lessons are sent forth with a fervent prayer that many thirsting young Sunday-school teachers and ministers may find the joy, peace and power of daily entering the secret chamber for a few minutes' prayer and devotional Bible study. What has been so marvelous, not to say miraculous in my life, I covet for all who read these lessons.